TOMASO'S FORTUNE

HENRY SETON MERRIMAN

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AND OTHER STORIES

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BY

HENRY SETON MERRIMAN

AUTHOR OF

"THE SOWERS," "THE ISLE OF UNREST," "THE VELVET GLOVE,"
"THE VULTURES," "BARLASCH OF THE GUARD,' ETC., ETC.

"The common problem, yours, mine, every one's,
Is—not to fancy what were fair in life
Provided it could be,—but, finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair. . . ."

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TOMASO'S FORTUNE

AND OTHER STORIES

I

SISTER

It does not matter where it was. I do not want other people—that is to say, those who were around us—to recognize Sister or myself. It is not likely that she will see this, and I am not sure that she knows my name. Of course, some one may draw her attention to this paper, and she may remember that the name affixed to it is that which I signed at the foot of a document we made out together—namely, a return of deaths. At the foot of this paper our names stood one beneath the other—stand there still, perhaps, in some forgotten bundle of papers at the War Office.

I only hope that she will not see this, for she might consider it a breach of professional etiquette; and I attach great importance to the opinion of this woman, whom I have only seen once in my whole life. Moreover, on that occasion she was subordinate to me—more or less in the position of a servant.

Suffice it to say, therefore, that it was war-time, and our trade was what the commercial papers call brisk. A war better remembered of the young than of the old, because it was, comparatively speaking, recent. The old fellows seem to remember the old fights better —those fights that were fought when their blood was still young and the vessels thereof unclogged.

It was, by the way, my first campaign, but I was not new to the business of blood; for I am no soldier —only a doctor. My only uniform—my full-parade dress—is a red cross on the arm of an old blue serge jacket—such jacket being much stained with certain dull patches which are better not investigated.

All who have taken part in war—doing the damage or repairing it—know that things are not done in quite the same way when ball-cartridge is served out instead of blank. The correspondents are very fond of reporting that the behaviour of the men suggested a parade—which simile, it is to be presumed, was borne in upon their fantastic brains by its utter inapplicability. The parade may be suggested before the real work begins —when it is a question of marching away from the landing-stage; but after the work—*our* work—has begun, there is remarkably little resemblance to a review.

We are served with many official papers which we never fill in, because, on the spur of the moment, it is apt to suggest itself that men's lives are more

important. We misapply a vast majority of our surgical supplies, because the most important item is usually left behind at headquarters or at the seaport depôt. In fact, we do many things that we should leave undone, and omit to do more which we are expected (officially) to do.

For some reason—presumably the absence of better men—I was sent up to the front before we had been three days at work. Our hospital by the river was not full when I received orders to follow the flying column with two assistants and the appliances of a field-hospital.

Out of this little nucleus sprang the largest depôt for sick and wounded that was formed during the campaign. We were within easy reach of headquarters, and I was fortunately allowed a free hand. Thus our establishment in the desert grew daily more important, and finally superseded the hospital at headquarters.

We had a busy time, for the main column had now closed up with the first expeditionary force, and our troops were in touch with the enemy not forty miles away from me.

In the course of time—when the authorities learnt to cease despising the foe, which is a little failing in British military high places—it was deemed expedient to fortify us, and then, in addition to two medical assistants, I was allowed three Government nurses.

This last piece of news was not hailed with so much enthusiasm as might have been expected. I am not in favour of bringing women anywhere near the front. They are, for their own sakes and for the peace of mind of others, much better left behind. If they are beyond a certain age they break down and have to be sent back at considerable trouble—that is to say, an escort and an ambulance cart, of which latter there are never enough. If they are below the climacteric—ever so little below it—they cause mischief of another description, and the wounded are neglected; for there is no passion of the human heart so cruel and selfish as love.

"I am sorry to hear it," I said to light-hearted little Sammy Fitz-Warrener of the Naval Brigade, who brought me the news.

"Sorry to hear it? Gad! I shouldn't be. The place has got a different look about it when there are women-folk around. They are so jolly clever in their ways—worth ten of your red-cross ruffians."

"That is as may be," I answered, breaking open the case of whisky which Sammy had brought up on the carriage of his machine-gun for my private consumption.

He was taking this machine-gun up to the front, and mighty proud he was of it.

"A clever gun," he called it; "an almighty clever gun."

He had ridden alongside of it—sitting on the top of his horse as sailors do—through seventy miles of desert

without a halt; watching over it and tending it as he might have watched and tended his mother, or perhaps some other woman.

"Gad! doctor," he exclaimed, kicking out his sturdy legs, and contemplating with some satisfaction the yellow hide top-boots which he had bought at the Army and Navy Stores. (I know the boots well, and—avoid them.) "Gad! doctor, you should see that gun on the war-path. Travels as light as a tricycle. And when she begins to talk—my stars! Click—click—click—click! For all the world like a steam-launch's engine—mowing 'em down all the time. No work for you there. It will be no use you and your satellites progging about with skewers for the bullet. Look at the other side, my boy, and you'll find the beauty has just walked through them."

"Soda or plain?" I asked, in parenthesis.

"Soda. I don't like the flavour of dead camel. A big drink, please. I feel as if I were lined with sand-paper."

He slept that night in the little shanty built of mud and roofed chiefly with old palm-mats, which was gracefully called the head surgeon's quarters. That is to say, he partook of such hospitality as I had to offer him.

Sammy and I had met before he had touched a rope or I a scalpel. We hailed from the same part of the country—down Devonshire way; and, to a limited

extent, we knew each other's people—which little phrase has a vast meaning in places where men do congregate.

We turned in pretty early—I on a hospital mattress, he in my bed; but Sam would not go to sleep. He would lie with his arms above his head (which is not an attitude of sleep) and talk about that everlasting gun.

I dozed off to the murmur of his voice expatiating on the extreme cunning of the ejector, and awoke to hear details of the rifling.

We did not talk of home, as do men in books when lying by a camp-fire. Perhaps it was owing to the absence of that picturesque adjunct to a soldier's life. We talked chiefly of the clever gun; and once, just before he fell asleep, Sammy returned to the question of the nurses.

"Yes," he said, "the head saw-bones down there told me to tell you that he had got permission to send you three nurses. Treat 'em kindly, Jack, for my sake. Bless their hearts! They mean well."

Then he fell asleep, and left me thinking of his words, and of the spirit which had prompted them.

I knew really nothing of this man's life, but he seemed singularly happy, with that happiness which only comes when daily existence has a background to it. He spoke habitually of women, as if he loved them

all for the sake of one; and this not being precisely my own position, I was glad when he fell asleep.

The fort was astir next morning at four. The bugler kindly blew a blast into our glassless window which left no doubt about it.

"That means all hands on deck, I take it," said Sam, who was one of the few men capable of good humour before tiffin time.

By six o'clock he was ready to go. It was easy to see what sort of officer this cheery sailor was by the way his men worked.

While they were getting the machine-gun limbered up, Sam came back to my quarters, and took a hasty breakfast.

"Feel a bit down this morning," he said, with a gay smile. "Cheap—very cheap. I hope I am not going to funk it. It is all very well for some of you long-faced fellows, who don't seem to have much to live for, to fight for the love of fighting. I don't want to fight any man; I am too fond of 'em all for that."

I went out after breakfast, and I gave him a leg up on to his very sorry horse, which he sat like a tailor or a sailor. He held the reins like tiller-lines, and indulged in a pleased smile at the effect of the yellow boots.

"No great hand at this sort of thing," he said, with a nod of farewell. "When the beast does anything out of the common, or begins to make heavy weather of it, *I am not.*"

He ranged up alongside his beloved gun, and gave the word of command with more dignity than he knew what to do with.

All that day I was employed in arranging quarters for the nurses. To do this I was forced to turn some of our most precious stores out into the open, covering them with a tarpaulin, and in consequence felt all the more assured that my chief was making a great mistake.

At nine o'clock in the evening they arrived, one of the juniors having ridden out in the moonlight to meet them. He reported them completely exhausted; informed me that he had recommended them to go straight to bed; and was altogether more enthusiastic about the matter than I personally or officially cared to see.

He handed me a pencil note from my chief at headquarters, explaining that he had not written me a despatch because he had nothing but a "J" pen, with which instrument he could not make himself legible. It struck me that he was suffering from a plethora of assistance, and was anxious to reduce his staff.

I sent my enthusiastic assistant to the nurses' quarters, with a message that they were not to report themselves to me until they had had a night's rest. Then I turned in.

At midnight I was awakened by the orderly, and summoned to the tent of the officer in command. This

youth's face was considerably whiter than his linen. He was consulting with his second in command, a boy of twenty-two or thereabouts.

A man covered with sand and blood was sitting in a hammock-chair, rubbing his eyes, and drinking something out of a tumbler.

"News from the front?" I inquired without ceremony, which hindrance we had long since dispensed with.

"Yes, and bad news."

It certainly was not pleasant hearing. Some one mentioned the word "disaster," and we looked at each other with hard, anxious eyes. I thought of the women, and almost decided to send them back before daylight.

In a few moments a fresh man was roused out of his bed, and sent full gallop through the moonlight across the desert to headquarters, and the officer in command began to regain confidence. I think he extracted it from the despatch-bearer's tumbler. After all, he was not responsible for much. He was merely a connecting-link, a point of touch between two greater men.

It was necessary to get my men to work at once, but I gave particular orders to leave the nurses undisturbed. Disaster at the front meant hard work at the rear. We all knew that, and endeavoured to make ready for a sudden rush of wounded.

The rush began before daylight. As they came in we saw to them, dressing their wounds and packing

them as closely as possible. But the stream was continuous. They never stopped coming; they never gave us a moment's rest.

At six o'clock I gave orders to awaken the nurses and order them to prepare their quarters for the reception of the wounded. At half-past six an Army Hospital Corps man came to me in the ward.

"Shockin' case, sir, just come in," he said. "Officer. Gun busted, sir."

"Take him to my quarters," I said, wiping my instruments on my sleeve.

In a few minutes I followed, and on entering my little room the first thing I saw was a pair of yellow boots.

There was no doubt about the boots and the white duck trousers, and although I could not see the face, I knew that this was Sammy Fitz-Warrener come back again.

A woman—one of the nurses for whom he had pleaded—was bending over the bed with a sponge and a basin of tepid water. As I entered she turned upon me a pair of calmly horror-stricken eyes.

"*Oh!*" she whispered meaningly, stepping back to let me approach. I had no time to notice then that she was one of those largely built women, with perfect skin and fair hair, who make one think of what England must have been before Gallic blood got to be so widely disseminated in the race.

"Please pull down that mat from the window," I said, indicating a temporary blind which I had put up.

She did so promptly, and returned to the bedside, falling into position as it were, awaiting my orders.

I bent over the bed, and I must confess that what I saw there gave me a thrill of horror which will come again at times so long as I live.

I made a sign to Sister to continue her task of sponging away the mud, of which one ingredient was sand.

"Both eyes," she whispered, "are destroyed."

"Not the top of the skull," I said; "you must not touch that."

For we both knew that our task was without hope.

As I have said, I knew something of Fitz-Warrener's people, and I could not help lingering there, where I could do no good, when I knew that I was wanted elsewhere.

Suddenly his lips moved, and Sister, kneeling down on the floor, bent over him.

I could not hear what he said, but I think she did. I saw her lips frame the whisper "Yes" in reply, and over her face there swept suddenly a look of great tenderness.

After a little pause she rose and came to me.

"Who is he?" she asked.

"Fitz-Warrener of the Naval Brigade. Do you know him?"

"No, I never heard of him. Of course—it is quite hopeless?"

"Quite."

She returned to her position by the bedside, with one arm laid across his chest.

Presently he began whispering again, and at intervals she answered him. It suddenly occurred to me that, in his unconsciousness, he was mistaking her for some one else, and that she, for some woman's reason, was deceiving him purposely.

In a few moments I was sure of this.

I tried not to look; but I saw it all. I saw his poor blind hands wander over her throat and face, up to her hair.

"What is this?" he muttered quite distinctly, with that tone of self-absorption which characterizes the sayings of an unconscious man. "What is this silly cap?"

His fingers wandered on over the snowy linen until they came to the strings.

As an aspirant to the title of gentleman, I felt like running away—many doctors know this feeling; as a doctor, I could only stay.

His fingers fumbled with the strings. Still Sister bent over the bed. Perhaps she bent an inch or two

nearer. One hand was beneath his neck, supporting the poor shattered head.

He slowly drew off the cap, and his fingers crept lovingly over the soft fair hair.

"Marny," he said, quite clearly, "you've done your hair up, and you're nothing but a little girl, you know —nothing but a little girl."

I could not help watching his fingers, and yet I felt like a man committing sacrilege.

"When I left you," said the brainless voice, "you wore it down your back. You were a little girl—you are a little girl now." And he slowly drew a hairpin out.

One long lock fell curling to her shoulder. She never looked up, never noticed me, but knelt there like a ministering angel—personating for a time a girl whom we had never seen.

"My little girl," he added, with a low laugh, and drew out another hairpin.

In a few moments all her hair was about her shoulders. I had never thought that she might be carrying such glory quietly hidden beneath the simple nurse's cap.

"That is better," he said—"that is better." And he let all the hairpins fall on the coverlet. "Now you are my own Marny," he murmured. "Are you not?"

She hesitated one moment. "Yes, dear," she said softly. "I am your own Marny."

With her disengaged hand she stroked his blanching cheek. There was a certain science about her touch, as if she had once known something of these matters.

Lovingly and slowly the smoke-grimed fingers passed over the wonderful hair, smoothing it.

Then he grew more daring. He touched her eyes, her gentle cheeks, the quiet, strong lips. He slipped to her shoulder, and over the soft folds of her black dress.

"Been gardening?" he asked, coming to the bib of her nursing apron.

It was marvellous how the brain, which was laid open to the day, retained the consciousness of one subject so long.

"Yes—dear," she whispered.

"Your old apron is all wet!" he said reproachfully, touching her breast where the blood—his own blood—was slowly drying.

His hand passed on, and as it touched her, I saw her eyes soften into such a wonderful tenderness that I felt as if I were looking on a part of Sister's life which was sacred.

I saw a little movement as if to draw back, then she resolutely held her position. But her eyes were dull with a new pain. I wonder—I have wondered ever since—what memories that poor senseless wreck of a man was arousing in the woman's heart by his wandering touch.

"Marny," he said, "Marny. It was not *too* hard waiting for me?"

"No, dear."

"It will be all right now, Marny. The bad part is all past."

"Yes."

"Marny, you remember—the night—I left—Marny—I want—no—no, your *lips*."

I knelt suddenly, and slipped my hand within his shirt, for I saw something in his face.

As Sister's lips touched his I felt his heart give a great bound within his breast, and then it was still.

When she lifted her face it was as pale as his.

I must say that I felt like crying—a feeling which had not come to me for twenty years. I busied myself purposely with the dead man, and when I had finished my task I turned, and found Sister filling in the papers—her cap neatly tied, her golden hair hidden.

I signed the certificate, placing my name beneath hers.

For a moment we stood. Our eyes met, and—we said nothing. She moved towards the door, and I held it open while she passed out.

Two hours later I received orders from the officer in command to send the nurses back to headquarters. Our men were falling back before the enemy.

II

A SMALL WORLD

> " Thine were the calming eyes
> That round my pinnace could have stilled the sea,
> And drawn thy voyager home, and bid him be
> Pure with their pureness, with their wisdom wise,
> Merged in their light, and greatly lost in thee."

It was midday at the monastery of Montserrat, and a monk, walking in the garden, turned and paused in his meditative promenade to listen to an unwonted noise. The silence of this sacred height is so intense that many cannot sleep at night for the hunger of a sound. There is no running water except the fountain in the patio. There are no birds to tell of spring and morning. There are no trees for the cool night winds to stir, nothing but eternal rock and the ancient building so closely associated with the life of Ignatius de Loyola. The valley, a sheer three thousand feet below, is thinly enough populated, though a great river and the line of railway from Manresa to Barcelona run through it. So clear is the atmosphere that at the great distance the contemplative denizens of the monastery may count the number of the railway carriages, while no sound of

the train, or indeed of any life in the valley, reaches their ears.

What the monk heard was disturbing, and he hurried to the corner of the garden, from whence a view of the winding road may be obtained. Floating on the wind came the sound, as from another world, of shouting, and the hollow rumble of wheels. The holy man peered down into the valley, and soon verified his fears. It was the diligencia, which had quitted the monastery a short hour ago, that flew down the hill to inevitable destruction. Once before in the recollection of the watcher the mules had run away, rushing down to their death, and carrying with them across that frontier the lives of seven passengers, devout persons, who, having performed the pilgrimage to the shrine of our Lady of Montserrat, had doubtless received their reward. The monk crossed himself, but, being human, forgot alike to pray and to call his brethren to witness the scene. It was like looking at a play from a very high gallery. The miniature diligencia on the toy road far below swayed from the bank of the highway to the verge—the four mules stretched out at a gallop, as in a picture. The shouts dimly heard at the monastery had the effect they were intended to create, for the monk could see the carters and muleteers draw aside to let the living avalanche go past.

There were but two men on the box-seat of the diligencia—the driver and a passenger seated by his

side. The monk recollected that this passenger had passed two days at Montserrat, inscribing himself in the visitors' book as Matthew S. Whittaker.

"I am ready to take the reins when your arms are cramped," this passenger was saying at that precise moment, "but I do not know the road, and I cannot drive so well as you."

He finished with a curt laugh, and, holding on with both hands, he turned and looked at his companion. He was not afraid, and death assuredly stared him in the face at that moment.

"Thanks for that, at all events," returned the driver, handling his reins with a steady skill. Then he fell to cursing the mules. As he rounded each corner of the winding road, he gave a derisive shout of triumph; as he safely passed a cart, he gave voice to a yell of defiance. He went to his death—if death awaited him —with a fine spirit, with a light in his eyes and the blood in his tanned cheeks.

The man at his side could perhaps have saved himself by a leap which might, with good fortune, have resulted in nothing more serious than a broken limb. As he had been invited by the driver to take this leap and had curtly declined, it is worth while to pause and give particulars of this passenger on the runaway diligencia. He was a slightly built man, dressed in the ordinary dark clothes and soft black felt hat of the middle-class Spaniard. His face was brown and sun-

dried, with deep lines drawn downwards from the nose to the lips in such a manner that cynicism and a mildly protesting tolerance were contending for mastery in an otherwise studiously inexpressive countenance.

"The Excellency does not blame me for this?" the driver jerked out, as he hauled round a corner with a sort of pride.

"No, my friend," replied the American; and he broke off suddenly to curve his two hands around his lips and give forth a warning shout in a clear tenor that rang down the valley like a trumpet.

A muleteer leading a heavily laden animal drew his beast into the ditch, and leapt into the middle of the road. He stepped nimbly aside and sprang at the leading mule, but was rolled into the ditch like an old hat.

"That is an old torero," shouted the driver. "Bravo, bravo!"

As they flew on, Whittaker turned in his seat and caught a glimpse of the man standing in the middle of the road, with arms spread out in an attitude of apology and deprecation.

"Ah!" cried the driver, "we shall not pass these. Now leap!"

"No," answered the other, and gave his warning shout.

Below them on the spiral road two heavy carts were slowly mounting. These were the long country carts used for the carriage of wine-casks, heavily laden

with barrels for the monastery. The drivers, looking up, saw in a moment what to expect, and ran to the head of their long teams of eight mules, but all concerned knew in a flash of thought that they could not pull aside in time.

"Leap, in the name of a saint!" cried the driver, clenching his teeth.

Whittaker made no answer. But he cleared his feet and sat forward, his keen face and narrow eyes alert to seize any chance of life. The maddened mules rushed on, seeking to free themselves from the swaying destroyer on their heels. The leaders swung round the corner, but refused to obey the reins when they caught sight of the cart in front. The brakes had long ceased to act; the wooden blocks were charred as by fire. The two heavier mules at the pole made a terrified but intelligent attempt to check the pace, and the weighty vehicle skidded sideways across the road, shuddering and rattling as it went. It poised for a moment on the edge of the slope, while the mules threw themselves into their collars—their intelligence seeming to rise at this moment to a human height. Then the great vehicle turned slowly over, and at the same moment Whittaker and the driver leapt into the tangle of heels and harness. One of the leaders swung right out in mid-air with flying legs, and mules and diligencia rolled over and over down the steep in a cloud of dust and stones.

When Matthew S. Whittaker recovered consciousness, he found himself in a richly furnished bedroom. He woke as if from sleep, with his senses fully alert, and began at once to take an interest in a conversation of which he had been conscious in the form of a faint murmur for some time.

"A broken arm, my child, and nothing more, so far as I can tell at present," were the first comprehensible words.

Whittaker tried to move his left arm, and winced.

"And the other man?" inquired a woman's voice in Spanish, but with an accent which the listener recognized at once. This was an Englishwoman speaking Spanish.

"Ah! the other man is dead. Poor Miguel! He was always civil and God-fearing. He has driven the diligencia up to us for nearly twenty years."

Whittaker turned his head, and winced again. The speaker was a monk—fat and goodnatured—one of the few now left in the great house on Montserrat. His interlocutor was a woman not more than thirty, with brown hair that gleamed in the sunlight, and a fresh, thoughtful face. Her attitude was somewhat independent, her manner indicated a self-reliant spirit. This was a woman who would probably make mistakes in life, but these would not be the errors of omission. She was a prototype of a sex and an age which err in advancing too quickly, and in holding that everything which is old-fashioned must necessarily be foolish.

Whittaker lay quite still and watched these two, while the deep-drawn lines around his lips indicated a decided sense of amusement. He was in pain, but that was no new condition to a man whose spirit had ever been robuster than his body. He had, at all events, not been killed, and his last recollection had been the effort to face death. So he lay with a twisted smile on his lips listening to Brother Lucas, who, sad old monk that he was, took infinite pleasure in glorifying to the young lady his own action in causing the monastery cart to be brought out, and in driving down the slope at a break-neck pace to place his medical knowledge at the disposal of such as might require it. He bowed in a portly way, and indicated with a very worldly politeness that he himself was, in fact, at the disposal of the Señorita.

"I was not always a monk—I began life as a doctor," he explained.

And his companion looked at him with speculative, clever eyes, scenting afar off, with the quickness of her kind, the usual little romance—the everlasting woman.

"Ah!" she said slowly.

And Whittaker in the alcove coughed, with discretion. Both turned and hurried towards him.

"He has recovered his senses," said the girl.

The monk had, however, not laid aside all the things of this world. He remembered the little ceremonies appertaining to the profession which he

had once practised. He waived aside the girl, and stooped over the bed.

"You understand what I say—you see me?" he inquired in a soothing voice.

"Most assuredly," replied Whittaker, coolly. "Most assuredly, my father. And I do not think there is much the matter with me."

"Holy Saints, but you go too quickly," laughed the monk. "You will be wanting next to get up and walk."

"I should not mind trying."

"Ah, that is good! Then you will soon be well. Señorita, we shall have no trouble with this patient. This, Señor, is the Señorita Cheyne, in whose house you find yourself, and to whom your thanks are due."

Whittaker turned in bed to thank her; but instead of speaking, he quietly fainted. He came to his senses again, and found that it was evening. The windows of his room were open, and he could see across the valley the brown hills of Catalonia, faintly tinged with pink. A nursing sister in her dark blue dress and white winged cap was seated at the open window, gazing reflectively across the valley. There was an odour of violets in the room. A fitful breeze stirred the lace curtains. Whittaker perceived his own travel-worn portmanteau lying half unpacked on a side table. It seemed that some one had opened it to seek the few necessaries of the moment. He noted with

a feeling of helplessness that his simple travelling accessories had been neatly arranged on the dressing-table. A clean handkerchief lay on the table at the bedside. The wounded man became conscious of a feeling that he had lost some of the solitary liberty which had hitherto been his. It seemed that he had been picked up on the road helpless and insensible by some one with the will and power to take entire charge of him. The feeling was so new to this adventurer that he lay still and smiled.

Presently the nun rose and came quietly towards him, disclosing within the halo of her snowy cap a gentle pink-and-white face wrinkled by the passage of uneventful years. She nodded cheerfully on seeing that his eyes were open, and gave him some soup which was warming on a spirit lamp in readiness for his return to consciousness.

"I will tell the Señorita," she said, and noiselessly quitted the room.

A minute later Miss Cheyne came in with a pleasant frou-frou of silk, and Whittaker wondered for whom she had dressed so carefully.

"I did not know," she said in English, with an ease of manner which is of this generation, "that I had succoured a countryman. You were literally thrown at my gate. But the doctor, who has just left, confirms the opinion of Brother Lucas that you are not seriously hurt. A broken fore-arm and a severe shake, they

say—to be cured by complete rest, which you will be able to enjoy here. For there is no one in the house but my aunt, Mrs. Dorchester, and myself."

She stood at the bedside, looking down at him with her capable, managing air. Whittaker now knew the source of that sense of being "taken in and done for," of which he had become conscious the moment his senses returned to him.

"They say," she went on, with a decisiveness which was probably an accentuation of her usual attitude, inspired by the necessity of sparing the patient the exertion of an explanation or an apology—"they say, however, that you are not naturally a very strong man, and that you have tried your constitution in the past, so that greater care is required than would otherwise be necessary in such a case."

She looked at the brown face and sinewy neck, the hollow cheeks, the lean hands ("all wires," as she decided in her own prompt mind), and her clear eyes were alight with a speculation as to what the past had been in which this man had tried his constitution.

"I have led a rough life," explained Whittaker; and Miss Cheyne nodded her head in a manner indicative of the fact that she divined as much.

"I thought you were a Spaniard," she said.

"No; I have lived in the Spanish colonies, however—the last few years—since the troubles began."

Miss Cheyne nodded again without surprise. She

had gone about the world, with those clear eyes of hers very wide open, and was probably aware that in those parts where, as Whittaker gracefully put it, "troubles" are, such men as this are usually to be found. For it is not the large men who make a stir in the world. These usually sit at home and love a life of ease. It is even said that they take to novel-writing and other sedentary occupations. And in the forefront, where things are stirring and history is to be manufactured, are found the small and the frail, such as Matthew S. Whittaker, who, in addition to the battles of progress, have to contend personally against constitutional delicacy, nervous depression, and disease.

Miss Cheyne kept silence for a few moments, and, during the pause, turned at the sound of horses' feet on the gravel below the windows. She seemed to have been expecting an arrival, and Whittaker noticed a sudden brightening of the eyes, an almost imperceptible movement of the shoulders, as if Miss Cheyne was drawing herself up. The American quickly reflected that the somewhat elaborate "toilette" was unusual, and connected it with the expected visitor. He was not surprised when, with a polite assurance that he had only to ask for anything he might require, she turned and left him.

Whittaker now remembered having been told by the voluble driver of the diligencia the history of

a certain English Señorita who, having inherited property from a forgotten uncle, had come to live in her "possession" on the mountain side. He further recollected that the house had been pointed out to him—a long, low dwelling of the dull red stone quarried in this part of Catalonia. Being of an observant habit, he remembered that the house was overgrown by a huge wisteria, and faced eastward. He turned his head painfully, and now saw that his windows were surrounded by mauve fronds of wisteria. His room was, therefore, situated in the front of the house. There was, he recollected, a verandah below his windows, and he wondered whether Miss Cheyne received her visitors there in the cool of the afternoon. He listened half-sleepily, and heard the horse depart, led away by a servant. There followed the murmur of a conversation, between two persons only, below his window. So far as he could gather from the tones, for the words were inaudible, they were spoken in English. And thus he fell asleep.

During the next few days Whittaker made good progress, and fully enjoyed the quiet prescribed to him by the doctors. The one event of the day was Miss Cheyne's visit, to which he soon learnt to look forward. He had, during an adventurous life, had little to do with women, and Miss Cheyne soon convinced him of the fact that many qualities—such as independence, courage, and energy—were not, as he had hitherto

imagined, the monopoly of men alone. But the interest thus aroused did not seem to be mutual. Miss Cheyne was kind and quick to divine his wants or thoughts; but her visits did not grow longer day by day as, day by day, Whittaker wished they would. Daily, moreover, the visitor arrived on horseback, and the murmured conversation in the verandah duly followed. A few weeks earlier Whittaker had made the voyage across to the island of Majorca, to visit an old companion-in-arms there, and offer him a magnificent inducement to return to active service. That comrade had smilingly answered that he held cards of another suite. Miss Cheyne likewise appeared to hold another suite, and the American felt vaguely that the dealer of life's cards seemed somehow to have passed him by.

He daily urged the young doctor to allow him to leave his bed, "if only," he pleaded with his twisted smile, "to sit in a chair by the window." At last he gained his point, and sat, watch in hand, awaiting the arrival of Miss Cheyne's daily visitor. To the end of his life Matthew Whittaker believed that some instinct guided him at this time. He had only spoken with his nurse and the doctor, and had refrained from making inquiries of either respecting the lady whose hospitality he enjoyed. He had now carefully recalled all that the dead driver of the diligencia had told him, and had dismissed half of it as mere gossip. Beyond

the fact that Miss Cheyne's aunt, Mrs. Dorchester, acted as her companion, he knew nothing. But he had surmised, from remarks dropped by the young lady herself, that her mother had been a Spaniard; hence the uncle from whom she had inherited this estate. He also had reason to believe that Miss Cheyne's mother had brought her up in the older faith.

He reflected on these matters, and smiled half cynically at the magnitude of his own interest in Miss Cheyne as he sat at the open window. He had not long to wait before the clatter of horse's feet on the hard road became audible. The house stood back from the high-road in the midst of terraced olive groves, and was entirely surrounded by a grove of cypress and ilex trees. The visitor, whose advent was doubtless awaited with as keen an impatience by another within the red stone house, now leisurely approached beneath the avenue of evergreen oak. Whittaker got painfully upon his feet, and stood, half concealed by the curtain. He was conscious of a singular lack of surprise when he recognized the face of the horseman as one that he had already seen, though, when he came in a flash of thought to reflect upon it, this among all he knew was the last face that he could have expected to see in that place.

He sat down quite coolly and mechanically, thinking and acting as men think and act, by instinct, in a crisis. He seemed to be obeying some pre-ordained plan.

The horseman was dark and clean-shaven—the happy possessor of one of those handsome Andalusian faces which are in themselves a passport in a world that in its old age still persists in judging by appearance. Whittaker scrupulously withdrew from the window. He had no desire to overhear their conversation. But his eyes were fierce with a sudden anger. The very attitude of the new-comer—his respectful, and yet patronizing, manner of removing his hat—clearly showed that he was a lover, perhaps a favoured one. And the American, who, with all his knowledge of the world, knew so little of women, stood in the middle of the room wrapt in thought. It seemed hardly possible that a woman of Miss Cheyne's intelligence, a woman no longer in the first flush of girlhood, should fail to perceive the obvious. He did not know that so far as her vanity is concerned a woman does not grow older by the passage of years, but younger—that she will often, for the sake of a little admiration, accept the careless patronage of a man, knowing well that his one good quality is the skill with which he flatters her. He was not aware that Miss Cheyne was distinctly handicapped, and that her judgment was warped by the fact that she had by some chance or another reached to years of discretion without ever having had a lover.

Whittaker was not an impulsive man, although as prompt in action as he was quick to make a decision.

He was a citizen of that new country where an old chivalry still survives. His sense of chivalry was also intensified by the fact, already stated, that he knew but little of that sex which is at the moment making a superficial stir in the world.

"If the harm is done, a day more will make it no worse, I reckon," he said reflectively. He would not listen to what they said, though he could have heard easily enough, had he so desired. He watched Miss Cheyne and her lover, however, as they slowly walked the length of the garden—she, holding a fan in the Spanish fashion, to shield her face from the setting sun; the man, hat in hand, and carrying himself with a sort of respectful grandeur, characteristic of his race. At the end of the garden they paused, and Whittaker smiled cynically at the sight of the man's dark eyes as he looked at Miss Cheyne. He was apparently asking for something, and she at last yielded, giving him slowly, almost shyly, a few violets that she had worn in her belt. Whittaker gave a curt laugh, but his eyes were by no means mirthful.

Later in the evening Miss Cheyne came into his room.

"You have had a visitor," he said, in the course of their usual conversation.

"Yes," she answered frankly; and Whittaker reflected that, at all events, she knew her own mind.

He said nothing further upon that subject, but later

he referred to a topic which he had hitherto scrupulously avoided. He had passed his life among a class of men who were not in the habit of growing voluble respecting themselves.

"I think you take me for an Englishman," he said. "I am not. I am an American."

"Indeed! You have no accent," replied Miss Cheyne; and, despite that other suite of cards that she held, she looked at him speculatively. She was, in a way, interested in him.

"I have lived abroad a great deal, the last few years in Cuba." And his quick eyes flashed across her face.

She was not interested in Cuba, at all events, and evidently knew nothing of that distressful island. When she left him, he stood looking at the closed door reflectively.

"It will be for to-morrow," he said to himself, with his short laugh.

The next morning the doctor paid his usual visit, and Whittaker handed him an envelope.

"I am leaving this evening," he said, "and I shall leave in your debt."

The doctor, who was a young man and a Spanish gentleman, slipped the envelope into his pocket.

"Thank you," he said. "The debt is mine. You are not fit to be moved yet; but it is as you like."

"Will you order me a carriage to be here at five o'clock this evening?"

"I will do as you like."

"And omit to mention it to my hostess. You understand my position here, and my fear of outstaying a most courteous welcome?"

"I understand," said the doctor, and departed.

At four o'clock Whittaker had packed his portmanteau. He took up his position at the window and waited. Before long he heard the sound of a horse's feet. Miss Cheyne's visitor presently appeared, and swung off his hat with the usual deferential pride. The horse was led away. The usual murmured conversation followed. Whittaker rose and walked to the door. He paused on the threshold, and looked slowly round the room as if conscious then that the moment was to be one of the indelible memories of his life.

On the stairs he needed the support of the balustrade. When he reached the verandah his face was colourless, with shining eyes. Miss Cheyne was sitting with her back turned towards him, but her companion saw him at once and rose to his feet, lifting his hat with a politely inquiring air. From long habit acquired among a naturally polite people, Whittaker returned the salutation.

"You do not recognise me, Señor?" he said, in English.

And the other shook his head, still polite and rather surprised.

"I was known in Cuba by the name of Mateo"

The Spaniard's handsome, sunburnt face slowly turned to the colour of ashes. His eyes looked into Whittaker's, not in anger, but with a pathetic mingling of reproach and despair.

"What is the meaning of this?" said Miss Cheyne, alert, and rising, characteristically, to the emergency of the moment.

Whittaker bit his lip and looked at the Spaniard, who seemed to be dazed.

"You had better go," he said, almost gently.

"What is the meaning of this?" repeated Miss Cheyne, looking from one to the other. Then she turned to Whittaker, by what instinct she never knew. "Who is this gentleman?" she asked, angrily. "What have you against him?"

Whittaker, still biting his lip, looked hard at her. Then he made a gesture with his two hands, which was more eloquent than a thousand words; for it seemed to convey to the two persons who breathlessly awaited his words that he found himself in a position that was intolerable.

"I knew him in Cuba," he said slowly. "I have nothing against him, Miss Cheyne; but the man is a priest."

* * * * *

"There, Señorita—I have made it myself."

The proprietor of the Venta of the Moor's Mill set down upon the table in front of the inn a cracked dish

containing an omelette. It was not a bad omelette, though not quite innocent of wood-ash, perhaps, and somewhat ill-shapen. The man laughed gaily and drew himself up. So handsome a man could surely be forgiven a broken omelette and some charcoal, if only for the sake of his gay blue eyes, his curling brown hair, and his devil-may-care air of prosperity. He looked at the Señorita and laughed in the manner of a man who had never yet failed to "get on" with women. He folded his arms with fine, open gestures, and stood looking with approving nods upon his own handiwork. He was without the shadow of the trailing vine which runs riot over bamboo trelliswork in front of the Venta, affording a much needed shade in this the sunniest spot in all Majorca, and the fierce sun beat down upon his face, which was tanned a deep, healthy brown. He was clad almost in white; for his trousers were of canvas, his shirt of spotless linen. Round his waist he wore the usual Spanish faja or bright red cloth. He was consciously picturesque, and withal so natural, so good-natured, so astonishingly optimistic, as to be quite inoffensive in his child-like conceit.

The Venta of the Moor's Mill stands, as many know, at the northern end of the Val D'Erraha, looking down upon the broader valley, through which runs the high road from Palma to Valdemosa. The city of Palma, itself, is only a few miles away, for such as know the mountain path. Few customers come this

way, and the actual trade of the Venta is small. Some day a German doctor will start a nerve-healing establishment here, with a *table d'hôte* at six o'clock, and every opportunity for practising the minor virtues —and the Valley of Repose will be the Valley of Repose no longer.

"Ah! It is a good omelette," said the host of the Venta, as Miss Cheyne took up her fork. "Though I have not always been a cook, nor yet an innkeeper."

He raised one finger, shook it from side to side in an emphatic negation, and laughed. Then he turned suddenly, and looked down into the valley with a grave face and almost a sigh.

The man had a history it appeared—and, rarer still, was willing to tell it.

She knew too much of the Spanish race, or perhaps of all men, to ask questions.

"Yes," she said pleasantly, "it is a good omelette."

And the man turned sharply and looked at her as if she had said something startling. She noticed his action, and showed surprise.

"It is nothing," he said with a laugh, "only a coincidence—a mere accident. It is said by the peasants that the mind of a friend has wings. Perhaps it is so. As I looked down into the valley I was thinking of a man—a friend. Yes—name of a Saint—he was a friend of mine, although a gentleman! Educated? Yes,

many languages, and Latin. And I—what am I? You see, Señorita, a peasant, who wears no coat."

And he laughed heartily, only to change again suddenly to gravity.

"And as I looked down into the valley I was thinking of my friend—and, believe me, you spoke at that moment with something in your voice—in your manner—who knows?—which was like the voice and manner of my friend. Perhaps, Señorita, the peasants are right, and the mind of my friend, having wings, flew to us at that moment."

The lady laughed, and said that it might be so.

"It is not that you are English," the innkeeper continued, with easy volubility. "For I know you belong to no other nation. I said so to myself the moment I saw you, riding up here on horseback alone. I called upstairs to Juanita that there was an English Señorita coming on a horse, and Juanita replied with a malediction, that I should raise my voice when the niño was asleep. She said that if it was the Pope of Rome who came on a horse he must not wake the child. 'No,' I answered, 'but he would have to go upstairs to see it;' and Juanita did not laugh. She sees no cause to laugh at anything connected with the niño —oh, no! it is a serious matter."

He was looking towards the house as he spoke.

"Juanita is your wife?" said the Englishwoman.

"Yes. We have been married a year, and I am

still sure that she is the most beautiful woman in the world. Is it not wonderful? And she will be jealous if she hears me talking all this while with the Señorita."

"You can tell her that the Señorita has grey hair," said Miss Cheyne, practically.

"That may be," said the innkeeper, looking at her with his head on one side, and a gravely critical air. "But you still have the air"—he shrugged his shoulders, and spread out his hands—"the air that takes a man's fancy. Who knows?"

Miss Cheyne, who had dealt much with a simple people, accustomed to the statement of simple facts in plain language, only laughed. There is a certain rough purity of thought which vanishes at the advance of civilisation. And cheap journalism, cheap fiction, cheap prudery have not yet reached Spain.

"I know nothing," went on the man, with a shrewd, upward nod of the head. "But the Señorita has a lover. He may be faithless, he may be absent, he may be dead—but he is there—the God be thanked!"

He touched his broad chest in that part where a deadly experience told him that the heart was to be found, and looked up to Heaven, all with a change of expression and momentary gravity quite incomprehensible to men of northern breed.

Miss Cheyne laughed again without self-consciousness. Uneducated people have a way of arriving at once at those matters that interest rich and poor

alike, which is rather refreshing, even to the highly educated.

"But I, who talk like a washerwoman, forget that I am an innkeeper," said the man, with a truer tact than is often found under fine linen. And he proceeded to wait on her with a grand air, as if she were a queen and he a nobleman.

"If Juanita were about it would be different," he said, whipping the cloth from the table and shaking the crumbs to the four winds. "And the Señorita would be properly served. But—what will you? the niño is but a fortnight old, and I—I am new at my trade. The Señorita takes coffee?"

Miss Cheyne intimated that she did take coffee.

"And you, perhaps, will take a cup also," she added, whereupon the man bowed in his best manner. He had that perfect *savoir-faire*—a certain innate gentlemanliness—which is the characteristic of all Spaniards. His manner indicated an appreciation of the honour, and conveyed at the same time the intimation that he knew quite well how to behave under the circumstances.

He went into the house from which—all the doors and windows being open—came the sound of his conversation with Juanita, while he prepared the coffee. It was quite a frank and open conversation, having Miss Cheyne for its object, and stating that she had not only found the omelette good, but had eaten it all.

Presently he returned with the coffee-pot, two cups,

and a small jug of cream on a tray. He turned the handle of the coffee-pot towards Miss Cheyne, and conveyed in one inimitable gesture that he would take his coffee from no other hand.

"The Señorita is staying in Palma?" he asked, pleasantly.

"Yes."

"For pleasure?"

"No—for business."

The innkeeper laughed gaily and deprecatingly, as if between persons of their station business was a word only to be mentioned as a sort of jest.

"I am the owner of a small property in the island—over in that direction—towards Soller. It is held on the 'rotas' system by a good farmer, who has frequently come to see me where I live at Monistrol, near Barcelona. He has often begged me to come to Majorca to see the property, and now I have come. I am staying a few days at Palma."

"Farming is good in Majorca," said the man, shrewdly. "You should receive a large sum for your share of the harvest. I, too, shall buy land presently when I see my chance, for I have the money. Ah, yes: I was not always an innkeeper!"

He sipped his coffee pensively.

"That reminds me again of my friend," he said, after a pause. "Why do I think of him this afternoon? It is a strange story; shall I tell it?"

"I shall be glad to hear it," replied Miss Cheyne, in her energetic way. She was stirring her coffee slowly and thoughtfully.

"I knew him in his own country—in America; and then in Cuba——"

Miss Cheyne ceased stirring her coffee suddenly, as if she had come against some object in the cup. A keen observer might have guessed that she had become interested at that moment in this idle tale.

"Ah! You know Cuba?" she said, indifferently interrogative.

"If I know Cuba?" he laughed, and spread out his hands in mute appeal to the gods. "If I know Cuba! When Cuba is an independent republic, Señorita—when the history of all this trouble comes to be written, you will find two names mentioned in its pages. The one name is Antonio. When you are an old woman, Señorita, you can tell your children—or perhaps your grandchildren, if the good God is kind to you—that you once knew Antonio, and took a cup of coffee with him. But you must not say it now—never—never. And the other name is Mateo. You can tell your children, Señorita, when your hair is white, that you once spoke to a man who was a friend to this Mateo."

He finished with his gay laugh, as if he were fully alive to his own fine conceit, and begged indulgence.

"He has been here—sitting where you sit now," he continued, with impressive gravity. "He came to

me: 'Antonio,' he said, 'There are five thousand men out there who want you.' 'Amigo,' replied I, 'there is one woman here who does the same'—and I bowed, and Mateo went away without me. I thought he had gone back there to conduct affairs—to fight in his careless way, with his tongue in his cheek, as it were. He did all with his tongue in his cheek—that queer Mateo. And then came a message from Barcelona, saying that he wanted me. Name of a dog, I went—for his letter was unmistakable. He had, it appeared, had an accident. I found him with his arm in a sling. He had been cared for in the house of an Englishwoman—so much he told—but I guessed more. This Englishwoman—well, he said so little about her, that I could only conclude one thing. You know, Señorita—when a man will not talk of a woman—well, it assuredly means something. But there was, it appears, another man—this man, I grind my teeth to tell you of it—he was a priest. One Bernaldez, whom we had both known in Cuba. He had, it appears, come over to Spain in ordinary dress; for he was too well known to travel as Bernaldez, the priest. He was a fine man—so much I will say for him. The Englishwoman was, no doubt, beautiful. Bernaldez met her. She did not know that he was a priest."

Antonio paused, shrugged his shoulders and spread out his arms.

"The devil did the rest, Señorita. And she?

Did she care for him? Ah—one never knows with women."

"Perhaps they do not always know themselves," suggested Miss Cheyne, without meeting her companion's eyes.

"Perhaps that is so, Señorita. At all events, Mateo went to these two, when they were together. Mateo was always quick and very calm. He faced Bernaldez, and he told the woman. Then he left them. And I found him in Barcelona, two days afterwards, living at the Hotel of the Four Nations, like one in his sleep. 'If Bernaldez wants me,' he said, 'he knows where to find me.' And the next day Bernaldez came to us, where we sat in front of the Café of the Liceo on the Rambla. 'Mateo,' he said, 'you will have to fight me.' And Mateo nodded his head. 'With the revolver.' Mateo looked up with his dry smile. 'I will take you at that game,' he said, 'for nuts'—in the American fashion, Señorita—one of their strange sad jokes. Then Bernaldez sat down—his eyes were hollow; he spoke like one who has been down to the bottom of misery. 'I know a place,' he said, 'that will suit our purpose. It is among the mountains, on the borders of Andorra. You take the train from Barcelona to Berga, the diligencia from Berga to Orgaña. Between Orgaña and La Seo de Urgel is a bridge called La Puente del Diabolo. I will meet you at this bridge on foot on Thursday morning at

nine o'clock. We can walk up into the mountains together. I shall bring a small travelling clock with me. We shall stand it on the ground between us, and when it strikes, we fire.'"

Antonio had, in the heat of his narrative, leant forward across the table. With quick gestures he described the whole scene, so that Miss Cheyne could see it as it had passed before his eyes.

"There is a madness, Señorita," he went on, "which shows itself by a thirst for blood. I looked at Bernaldez. He was sane enough, but I think the man's heart was broken. 'It is well,' said Mateo; 'I am your man—at the Puente del Diabolo at nine o'clock on Thursday morning.' And mind you, Señorita, these were not Italians or Greeks—they were a Spaniard and an American—men who mean what they say, whether it be pleasant or the reverse."

Miss Cheyne was interested enough now. She sat, leaning one arm on the table, and her chin in the palm of her hand. She held her lip with her teeth, and watched the man's quick expressive face.

"We were there at nine o'clock," he went on, "that Mateo, with his arm in a sling. We had passed the night at the hotel of the Libertad at Orgaña, where we both slept well enough. What will you?—when one is no longer young, the pulse is slow. The morning mist had descended the mountain side, the air was cold. There at the Puente, leaning against the wall,

cloaked and quiet—was Bernaldez. 'Ah!' he said to me, 'you have come, too?' 'Yes, Amigo,' I answered, 'but I do not give the word for two friends to let go at each other. Your little clock can do that.' He nodded and said nothing. Señorita, I was sorry for the man. Who was I that I should judge? You remember, you, who read your Bible, the writing on the ground? Bernaldez led the way, and we climbed up into the mountains in the morning mist. Somewhere above us there was a little waterfall singing its eternal song. In the cloud, where we could not see him, a curlew hung on his heavy wings, and gave forth his low warning whistle. 'Have a care—have a care,' he seemed to cry. Presently Bernaldez stopped, and looked around him. It was a desolate place. 'This will do,' he said. 'And he who drops may be left here. The other may turn on his heel, say "A Dios," and go in safety.' 'Yes,' answered Mateo. 'This will do as well as any other place.' Bernaldez looked at him, with a laugh. 'Ah,' he said, 'you think that you are sure to kill me—but I shall, at all events, have a shot for my money. Who knows? I may kill you.' 'That is quite possible,' answered Mateo. Bernaldez threw back his cloak. He carried the little travelling clock in one hand—a gilt thing made in Paris. 'We will stand it here,' he said, 'on a rock between us.' We were in a little hollow far up the mountain side, and the mist wrapped us round like

a cloak. I know these mountains, Señorita, for it was here that the fiercest of the fighting in the last Carlist War took place. There are many dead up there even now, who have never been found. I also was in that trouble—ah, no, I was not always an innkeeper!"

"Go on with your story," said Miss Cheyne, curtly, and closed her teeth over her lower lip again.

"We stood there, then, and watched Bernaldez take the clock from its case. He held it to his ear to make sure that it was going. It seemed to me that it ticked as loud up there as a clock ticks in a room at night. Bernaldez set forward the hands till they stood at five minutes to eleven. 'The eleventh hour,' said Mateo, with his dry laugh. Bernaldez set the clock down again. He took off his hat and threw it down to mark the ground. 'Ten paces,' he said, and, turning on his heel, counted aloud. I looked half-instinctively at his bared head. The tonsure was still visible to any who sought it; for it was but half-grown over. Mateo counted his steps and then turned. The clock gave a little tick, as such clocks do, four minutes before they strike. It seemed to me to hurry its pace as we three stood listening in that silence. We could hear the whisper of the clouds as they hurried through the mountains. The clock gave another click, and the two men raised their pistols of a similar pattern. The little gong rang out, and immediately after two shots,

one following the other. Bernaldez had fired first. Mateo—a man with a reputation to care for—took a moment longer for his aim. I heard Bernaldez's bullet sing past his ear like a mosquito. Bernaldez fell forward—thus, on his arm—and the clock had not ceased striking when we stood over him; and Mateo had held the pistol in his left hand."

The narrator finished abruptly with a quick gesture. All through his story he had added a vividness to his description by quick movements of the hand and head, by his flashing eyes, his southern fire, so that his hearer could see the scene as he had seen it; could feel the stillness of the mountains; could hear the whisper of the clouds; could see the two men facing each other in the mist. With a gesture he showed her how Bernaldez lay, on his face on the wet stones, with a half-concealed tonsure, turned towards heaven in mute appeal, awaiting the last great hearing of his case in that Court where there is no appeal.

"And there we left him, Señorita," added Antonio, shortly.

He rose, walked away from her to the edge of the great slope, and stood looking down into the valley that lay shimmering below him. After a time he came back slowly. In his simplicity he was not ashamed of dimmed eyes.

"I tell you this, Señorita," he said with a laugh, "because you are an Englishwoman, and because

this Mateo was my friend. He is an American. His name is Whittaker—Matthew S. Whittaker. And this afternoon I was reminded of him; I know not why. Perhaps it was something that I said myself, or some gesture that I made, which I had caught from him. If one thinks much about a person, one may catch his gestures or his manner: is it not so? And then you reminded me of him a second time. That was strange."

"Yes," said Miss Cheyne, thoughtfully; "that was strange."

"He went to Cuba again at once, Señorita; that was a year ago. And I have never heard from him. If, as the peasants say, the mind of a friend has wings, perhaps Mateo's mind has flown on to tell me that he is coming. He said he would come back."

"Why was he coming back?" asked Miss Cheyne.

"I do not know, Señorita."

Miss Cheyne had risen, and was making ready to depart. Her gloves and riding-whip lay on the table. The afternoon was far spent, and already the shadows were lengthening on the mountain-side. She paid the trifling account, Antonio taking the money with such a deep bow that the smallness of the coin was quite atoned for. He brought her horse from the stable.

"The horse and the Señorita are both tired," he said, with his pleasant laugh. And, indeed, Miss

Cheyne looked suddenly weary. "It is not right that you should go by the mountain path," he added. "It is so easy to lose the way. Besides, a lady alone—it is not done in Spain."

"No; but in England women are learning to take care of themselves," laughed Miss Cheyne.

She placed her foot within his curved hands, and he lifted her to the saddle. All her movements were easy and independent. It seemed that she only stated a fact, and the man shook his head forebodingly. He belonged to a country which in some ways is a century behind England and America. She nodded a farewell, and turned the horse's head towards the mountain path.

"I shall find my way," she said. "Never fear."

"Only by good fortune," he answered, with a shake of the head.

The sun had almost set when she reached Palma. At the hotel her lawyer, who had made the voyage from Barcelona with her, awaited her with impatience, while her maid leant idly from the window. In the evening she went abroad again, alone, in her independent way. She walked slowly on the Cathedral terrace, where priests lingered, and a few soldiers from the neighbouring barracks smoked a leisurely cigarette. All turned at intervals, and looked in the same direction—namely, towards the west, where the daylight yet lingered in the sky. The moon, huge and yellow, was rising over the mountains, above Manacor, at the eastern end of

the island. One by one the idlers dropped away, moving with leisurely steps towards the town. In very idleness Miss Cheyne followed them. She knew that they were going to the harbour in anticipation of the arrival of the Barcelona steamer. She was on the pier with the others, when the boat came alongside. The passengers trooped off, waving salutations to their friends. One among them, a small-made, frail man, detached himself from the crowd, and made his way towards Miss Cheyne, as if this meeting had been pre-arranged—and who shall say that it was not?—by the dim decrees of Fate.

III

IN A CROOKED WAY

"And let the counsel of thine own heart stand."

It was almost dark, and the Walkham River is much overhung in the parts that lie between Horrabridge and the old brickworks.

In the bed of the river a man stumbled heavily along, trusting more to his knowledge of the river than to his eyesight. He was fishing dexterously with flies that were almost white—flies which seemed to suit admirably the taste of those small brown trout which never have the sense to leave alone the fare provided for their larger white brethren.

Suddenly he hooked a larger fish, and, not daring to step back beneath the overhanging oak, he proceeded to tire his fish out in the deep water. In ten minutes he brought it to the landing-net, and as he turned to open his creel his heart leapt in his breast. A man was standing in the water not two feet behind him.

"Holloa," he gasped.

"I won't insult you by telling you not to be frightened," said the voice of a gentleman. There was no mistaking it. The speaker stood quite still, with the water bubbling round his legs. He was hatless, and his hair was cut quite short.

A thought flashed across the fisherman's slow brain. Like the rest of his craft, he was slower of mind than of hand.

"Yes," said the other, divining his thoughts, "I'm from Dartmoor. You probably heard of my escape two days ago."

"Yes," replied the other, quietly, while he wound in his line. "I heard of it."

"And where do they say I am?"

"Oh, the police have got a clue—as usual," replied the fisherman.

The escaped convict laughed bitterly, but the laugh broke off into a sickening cackle.

"I've been in those brickworks," he said, "all the time, meditating murder. I stole a loaf from a baker's cart; but man cannot live by bread alone; ah! Ha! ha!"

The fisherman held out his flask, which the other took, and opened the somewhat uncommon silver top with ease bred of knowledge.

He poured himself out a full glass and drank it off.

"I haven't had that taste in my mouth for four

years," he said, returning the flask. "And you are guilty of felony!"

The fisherman probably knew this, for he merely laughed.

"Do you know Prince Town?" the convict asked abruptly.

The other nodded, glancing in the direction of the rising moor.

"And you've read the rules on the gate? *Parcere subjectis*, cut in the stone over the top. Good God!"

The fisherman nodded again.

"The question is," said the convict, after a pause, during which they had waded back to the bank, "whether you are going to help me or not? Heavens! I *nearly* killed you while you were playing that fish."

"Ya-as," drawled the fisherman. "I take it that you must have been tempted. I never heard you, owing to the rush of the water."

They were both big men, and the convict stared curiously into the long, clean-shaven face of this calm speaker. A smile actually flickered for a moment in his desperate eyes.

"What I want," he said, "is your mackintosh, your waders, and your hat—also your rod-case with a long stick in it. The handle of your landing-net will do. Where do you come from?"

"Plymouth. I am going back by the seven-thirty from Horrabridge."

"With a return ticket?"

"Yes."

"I should like that also."

The fisherman was slowly disjointing his rod.

"Suppose I told you to come and take 'em?" he said, with the drawl again.

The convict looked him up and down with a certain air of competent criticism.

"Then there would be a very pretty fight," he said, with a laugh, which he checked when he detected the savour of the prison-yard that was in it.

"We haven't time for the fight," said the fisherman.

And there came a hot gasp of excitement from the convict's lips. His stake was a very large one.

In the same slow, reflective manner, the fisherman unbuttoned the straps of his waders at the thigh, and sat down to unlace his brogues.

"Here," he said, "pull 'em off for me. They're so damnably sopped."

He held up his leg, and the convict pulled off the wet fishing-stockings with some technical skill.

He drew them on over his own stockinged legs, and the fisherman kicked the brogues towards him. In exchange the convict handed him his own shoes.

"Am I to wear these?" the fisherman asked, with something in his voice that might have been amusement.

"Yes; they're a little out of shape, I'm afraid. The Queen is no judge of a shoe."

"I guess not!" answered the other, lacing.

There was a little silence.

"I suppose," said the convict, with a curious eagerness, "that you have seen a bit of the world?"

"Here and there," answered the other, searching for the return half of his ticket.

"Should you think, now, that a girl would wait four years for a chap who, in the eyes of the world, was not worth waiting for?"

The fisherman, not being an absolute fool, knew that there was only one answer to give. But he was a kind-hearted man, so he told a lie. There was something about this convict that made him do it.

"Yes; I should think she would. Girls are not always rational, I guess."

The other said nothing. He took the mackintosh-coat and the creel and the rod-case without a word—even of thanks. His manners were brisker, as if the angler's lie had done him good. The change of costume was now complete, and the convict would pass anywhere for an innocent disciple of Isaac Walton.

For a moment they stood thus, looking at each other. Then the convict spoke.

"Can you lend me a fiver?" he asked.

"Oh yes!"

Carelessly opening his purse, and displaying a good number of bank-notes, he passed one to the unsteady hand held out.

"Want any more?" he asked, with a queer laugh.

"I'll take another if you can spare it."

A second note passed from hand to hand.

"Thanks," said the convict. "Now tell me your name and address; I shall want to send these things back to you if—if I have any luck."

And the effort to steady his voice was quite apparent.

"Caleb S. Harkness, United States frigate *Bruiser*, now lying at Plymouth," replied the other, tersely.

"Ah! you are an American?"

"That is why I don't care a d——n for your laws."

"*Mr.* Harkness—or what?"

"I'm her captain," he replied modestly.

They shook hands and parted.

It was only as he plodded along the Tavistock Road, limping in the regulation shoes, that the American remembered that he had quite omitted to ask the convict any questions. He had parted with his mackintosh, and it was pouring. Tavistock was two miles off, and he had no notion what trains there were to Plymouth. Yet he regretted nothing, and at times a queer smile flitted over his countenance. He was a man holding very decided views of his own upon most subjects, and no one suspected him of it, because he never sought to force them upon others. What he loved above all in men was that species of audacious and gentlemanly coolness which is found in greater

perfection in the ranks of the British aristocracy than anywhere else in the world.

He was not the sort of man to be afraid of any one, or two, or three men—he had never, for a moment, thought of fearing the fellow who had gone off with his mackintosh, his waders, and his two five-pound notes. We all try to be our ideal, and Caleb S. Harkness prided himself on being the coolest man in the two hemispheres. He had met a cooler, and rather than acknowledge his inferiority he had parted with the valuables above mentioned, with no other guarantee of their safe return than a gentlemanly inflection of voice.

Two days later he received his waders, mackintosh, and brogues; also a new fishing-rod of the very best quality made in England, and two five-pound notes.

America loves to show her appreciation of her great sons, but she does not always do it wisely when she begins to cast honours about. If England showed the same appreciation, some of us would not be so cruelly industrious with our pens; but that is the affair of the British public, who suffer most.

Caleb S. Harkness was bound to get on. Firstly, because his audacity was unrivalled, and secondly, he knew it was wise to be audacious.

In due course he rose as high as he conveniently could in the Navy active, and turned his attention to the Navy passive, which latter means a nice little house

in Washington, and the open arms of the best society in that enlightened city. Here also he got on, because men were even more impressed by his audacity than the sea had been. Also he developed a new talent. He found within himself an immense capacity for making others appear ridiculous, and there is no man in the world so sensitive as your American senator.

Thus in six years' time we find Caleb S. Harkness moving, not in the bed of an English trout-stream, but in the lap of Washingtonian luxury. It was a great night in the Government city, for England had sent one of her brightest stars to meet the luminaries of the United States in peaceful arbitration. The British Plenipotentiary had not yet been seen of the multitude —but he was the eldest son of a British Earl, and had a title of his own. That was enough for Washington, with some to spare for Boston and New York. Also he had proved himself equal to two American statesmen and their respective secretaries. He was, therefore, held in the highest esteem by all the political parties except that to which the worsted statesmen belonged.

The President's levee was better attended than usual; that is to say, there was not even room on the stairs, and America's first-born, as per election, had long ago lost all feeling in the digits of his right hand.

Caleb S. Harkness was moving about in the quieter rooms, awaiting the great crush, when a lady and a man entered and looked around them with some amusement.

"Lord!" ejaculated Admiral Harkness, when his slow and mournful eyes rested on the lady. The exclamation, if profane, was justified, for it is probable that the American had never before set eyes on such a masterpiece of the Creator's power. There was in this woman's being—in her eyes, her face, her every movement—that combination of nonchalance and dignity which comes to beautiful and bright-minded girls when they are beginning to leave girlhood behind them. She was moderately tall, with hair of living brown, and deep blue eyes full of life and sweetness. She was not slim, but held herself like a boy with the strength that comes of perfect proportion. She was one of those women who set a soldier or a sailor thinking what manner of men her brothers must be.

Caleb Harkness observed all this with the unobtrusive scrutiny of his nation. He was standing near a curtained doorway buttoning his glove, and some one coming behind him pushed against him.

"Beg pardon, Harkness," said a voice, and the Chief Secretary of the English Legation patted him on the shoulder. "Didn't see you. Looking for some one. By George, what a heat! Ah! there he is—thank goodness!"

And he went towards the lady and man who had just entered.

"Here, Monty, you're wanted at once," Harkness

heard him say to the youth, who appeared to be a few years younger than his beautiful companion.

He spoke a few words to the lady, who replied laughingly, and the British Attaché came towards Harkness.

"Harkness," he said; "want to introduce you to Lady Storrel."

The American followed with a smile on his lean face. He knew that he was being introduced to Lady Storrel merely because there happened to be no one else at hand and her cavalier was wanted elsewhere.

"Lady Storrel, let me present to you Admiral Harkness, the man," he added, over his shoulder, "who is going to make the United States the first Naval Power in the world."

And with a good-natured laugh the two men went off, speaking hurriedly together.

"Is that true?" asked the lady, smiling with that mixture of girlishness and English grand-ladyism, which was so new to Caleb S. Harkness.

"Quite," he answered; "but I am not going to tell you how."

"No, please don't. Of course, you are an American?"

"Yes; but you need not mind that."

"What do you mean?" she asked, looking at him frankly.

"I take it," he answered, with a twinkle in his

grave eyes, which she saw, and liked him for, "that you want some one to listen to your impressions of —all this. It *is* rum, is it not?"

She laughed. "Yes," she admitted, "it is—*rum*."

In a few minutes they had found a seat beneath a marvellous stand of flowers, and she was chattering away like a schoolgirl while he listened, and added here and there a keen comment or a humorous suggestion.

Presently she began talking of herself, and in natural sequence of her husband, of their home in England, of his career, and her hatred of polities.

"And," she said suddenly, at the end of it, "here *is* my husband."

Harkness followed the direction of her glance, and looked upon a man in English Court-dress coming towards them.

"Ah!" he said, in a peculiar, dull voice, "that is your husband?"

She was smiling upon the man who approached, beckoning to him to come with her eyes, as women sometimes do. She turned sharply upon Harkness, her attention caught by something in his voice.

"Yes?" she answered.

Harkness had risen with a clatter of his sword on the polished floor, and stood awaiting the introduction.

"My husband—Admiral Harkness."

The men bowed, and, before they could exchange

a *banal* observation, the fair young man who had been called away came up.

"Phew, this is worse than Simla," he said; then, offering his arm to Lady Storrel, "Alice," he continued, "I have discovered some ices, *the* most lovely ices."

They moved away, the lady favouring Harkness with a little nod, leaving the two tallest men in that assembly facing each other.

When they were gone, Caleb S. Harkness and Lord Storrel looked into each other's eyes.

"So," said Harkness, lapsing suddenly into a twang, "she waited."

The other nodded. He raised his perfectly gloved hand to his moustache, which he tugged pensively to either side.

"Yes," he answered; "she waited."

Then he looked round the room, and, seeing that they were almost alone, he moved towards the seat just vacated by his wife.

"Come and sit down," he said, "and I will tell you a little story."

"Does she know it?" enquired Harkness, when they were seated.

"No."

"Then I don't want to hear it! You'd better keep it to yourself, I reckon."

The Englishman gave a little laugh, and lapsed into silence—thinking abstractedly.

"I should like to tell you some of it, for my own sake. I don't want you to go away thinking—something that is not the fact."

"I would rather not have the story," persisted Harkness. This American had some strange notions of a bygone virtue called chivalry. "Give me a few facts—I will string them together."

Lord Storrel was sitting forward on his low chair, with his hands clasped between his knees. They were rather large hands—suggestive of manual labour.

"Suppose," he said, without looking round, "that a man is in a street row in Dublin, when no one knows he is even in the town. Suppose the—eh—English side of the question is getting battered, and he hits out and kills a drunken beast of an Irish agitator. Suppose an innocent man is accused of it and the right chap is forced to come forward and show up *under a false name* and gets five years. Suppose he escapes after three and a half, and goes home, saying that he has been in America, cattle ranching—having always been a scapegrace, and a ne'er-do-well, who never wrote home when he had gone off in a huff. Suppose he had tried all this for the sake of—a girl, and had carried it through——"

Caleb Harkness had discovered that the identity of the British Plenipotentiary had become known to some of the more curious of the President's guests, who were

now mooning innocently around them as they sat. He moved in his chair as if to rise.

"Yes—I can suppose all that," he said.

The Englishman's nerve was marvellous. He saw what Harkness had seen a moment before, and over his face came the bland smile of an intelligent Englishman talking naval matters with an American admiral.

"Of course," he said, "I am at your mercy."

"I was at yours once; so now we are quits, I take it."

And the two big men rose and passed out of the room together.

IV

THE TALE OF A SCORPION

SPAIN is a country where custom reigns supreme. The wonder of to-day is by to-morrow a matter of indifference.

The man who came a second time to the Café Carmona in the Calle Velasquez in Seville must have known this; else the politely surprised looks, the furtive glances, the whisperings that met his first visit would have sent him to some other house of mild entertainment. The truth was that the Café Carmona was, and is still, select; with that somewhat narrow distinctiveness which is observed by such as have no friendly feelings towards the authorities that be.

It is a small café, and foreigners had better not look for it. Yet this man was a foreigner—in fact an Englishman. He was one of those quiet, unobtrusive men, who are taller than they look, and more important than they care to be considered. He could, for instance, pass down the crowded Sierpe of an evening, without

so much as attracting a glance ; for, by a few alterations in dress, he converted his outward appearance into that of a Spaniard. He was naturally dark, and for reasons of his own he spared the razor. His face was brown, his features good, and a hat with a flat brim is easily bought. Thus this man passed out of his hotel door in the evening the facsimile of a dozen others walking in the same street.

Moreover, he had no great reason for doing this. He preferred, he said, to pass unnoticed. But at the Foreign Office it was known that no man knew Spain as Cartoner knew it. Some men are so. They take their work seriously. Cartoner had looked on the map of Europe some years before for a country little known of the multitude, and of which the knowledge might prove to be of value. His eye lighted on Spain ; and he spent his next leave there, and the next, and so on.

Consequently there was no one at the Foreign Office who could hold a candle to Cartoner in matters Spanish. That is already something—to have that said of one. He is a wise man nowadays who knows something (however small it be) better than his neighbour. Like all his kind, this wise man kept his knowledge fresh. He was still learning—he was studying at the Café Carmona in the little street in Seville, called Velasquez.

When he pushed the inner glass door open and

lounged into the smoke-filled room, the waiter, cigarette in mouth, nodded in a friendly way without betraying surprise. One or two old *habitués* glanced at him, and returned to the perusal of *La Libertád* or *El Imparcial* without being greatly interested. The stranger had come the night before. He liked the place—the coffee suited his taste—"*y bien*," let him come again.

The waiter came forward without removing the cigarette from his lips; which was already a step. It placed this new-comer on a level with the older frequenters of the Carmona.

"Café?" he inquired.

"Café!" replied the stranger, who spoke little.

He had selected a little table standing rather isolated at one end of the room, and he sat with his back to the wall. The whole Café Carmona lay before him, and through the smoke of his cigarette he looked with quiet, unobtrusive eyes, studying . . . studying.

Presently an old man entered. This little table was his by right of precedence. He had been sitting at it the night before when the Englishman had elected to sit beside him; bowing as he did so in the Spanish manner, and clapping his hands in the way of Spain, to call the waiter when he was seated.

It was this evening the turn of the old man to bow, and the Englishman returned his salutation. They sat some time in silence. but when Cartoner passed the

sugar the innate politeness of the Spaniard perceived the call for conversation.

"His Excellency is not of Seville?" he said, with a pleasant smile on his wrinkled, clean-shaven face.

"No; I am an Englishman."

"Oh!"

The keen old face hardened suddenly, until the features were like the wrinkles of a walnut; and the Spaniard drew himself up with all the dignity of his race.

The quiet eyes of Cartoner of the Foreign Office never left his face. Cartoner was surprised; for he knew Spain—he was aware that the Peninsular War had not been forgotten. He had never, in whatsoever place or situation, found it expedient to conceal his nationality.

The old Spaniard slowly unfolded his cloak, betraying the shabbiness of its crimson plush lining. He lighted a cigarette, and then the national sense of politeness prevailed against personal feeling.

"His Excellency knows Gibraltar?"

"I have been there."

"Nothing more?"

"Nothing more."

"Pardon me," said the old man, with a grave bow. "I thought—the Spanish of His Excellency misled me."

The Englishman laughed quietly. "You took me

for a Scorpion," he said. "I am not that. I learnt your language here and in the mountains of Andalusia."

"Then, I beg the pardon of His Excellency."

Cartoner made a Spanish gesture with his hand and shoulders, indicating that no such pardon was called for.

"Like you," he said, "I do not love the Scorpion."

The Spaniard's eyes lighted up with a gleam which was hardly pleasant to look upon.

"I *hate* them," he hissed, bringing his face close to the quiet eyes; and the Spanish word means more than ours.

Then he threw himself back in his chair with an upward jerk of the head.

"I have good reason to do so," he added. "I sometimes wonder why I ever speak to an Englishman; for they resemble you in some things, these Scorpions. This one had a fair moustache, blue eyes, clean-cut features, like some of those from the North. But he was not large, this one—the Rock does not breed a large race. They are mean little men, with small white hands and women's feet. Ah, God! how I hate them all!"

The Englishman took a fresh cigarette from a Russia leather case, and pushed the remainder across the table for his companion to help himself when he had finished mashing the crooked paper between his lips.

"I know your language," the Spaniard went on, "as well almost as you know mine. But I do not speak it now. It burns my throat—it hurts."

Cartoner lighted his cigarette. He betrayed not the smallest feeling of curiosity. It was marvellous how he had acquired the manner of these self-contained Sons of the Peninsula.

"I will tell it."

The Englishman leant his elbow on the table, and his chin within his hand, gazing indifferently out over the marble tables of the Café Carmona. The men seated there interchanged glances. They knew from the fierce old face, from the free and dramatic gestures, that old Pedro Roldos was already telling his story to the stranger.

"Santa Maria!" the old man was saying. "It is not a pleasant story. I lived at Algeciras—I and my little girl, Lorenza. Too near the Rock—too near the Rock. You know what we are there. I had a business—the contraband, of course—and sometimes I was absent for days together. But Lorenza was a favourite with the neighbours—good women who had known my wife when she was the beauty of St. Roque—just such a girl as Lorenza. And I trusted Lorenza; for we are all so. We trust and trust, and yet we know that love and money will kill honesty and truth at any moment. These two are sacred—more sacred than honesty or truth. *Diavolo!* What a fool I was. I ought to have

known that Lorenza was too pretty to be left alone—ignorant as she was of the ways of the world.

"Then the neighbours began to throw out hints. They spoke of the English Caballero, who was so fond of riding round the Bay, and they hinted that it was not to see our old town of Algeciras that he came.

"One night I came home after a successful journey. I had been as far as Buceita with a train of five mules—a clear run. When I opened the door Lorenza was gone. Mother of God! gone—gone without a word! I went and fetched Niño—Niño, whose father had been my partner until he was shot by the Guardia Civile one night in the mountain behind Gaucin. There was no one like Niño for mule work in the mountains or for the handling of a boat when the west wind blew across the Bay. Niño, whom I wanted for a son-in-law, having no Niño of my own. I told him. He said nothing, but followed me to the quay and we got the boat out. In half an hour I was at the office of the Chief of the Police at Gibraltar. We sat there all night, Niño and I. By ten o'clock the next morning we knew that it was not one of the English officers—nor any civilian living on the Rock. 'It may,' said the Chief of Police, who seemed to know every one in his little district, 'be a passing stranger or—or a Scorpion. We do not know so much about them. We cannot penetrate to their houses.' I gave him a description of Lorenza; he undertook to communicate with England and with

the Spanish police. And Niño and I went back to our work. It is thus with us poor people. Our hearts break—all that is worth having goes from our lives, and the end of it is the same; we go back to our work."

The old man paused. His cigarette had gone out long ago. He relighted it and smoked fiercely in silence for some moments. Cartoner made a sign to the waiter, who, with the intelligence of his race, brought a decanter of the wine which he knew the Spaniard preferred.

During all the above relation Cartoner had never uttered a syllable. At the more violent points he had given a sympathetic little nod of the head—nothing more.

"It was from that moment that I began to learn the difference between Englishmen and Scorpions," Pedro Roldos went on. "Up to then I had not known that it made a difference being born on the Rock or in England. I did not know what a Scorpion was—with all the vices of England and Spain in one undersized body. I haunted the Rock. I learnt English. All to no avail. Lorenza was gone. Niño never said anything—he merely stayed by my side—but I think that something—some fibre had broken within him while he held the sheet that first night, sailing across the Bay in a gale of wind.

"Thus—for a year. Then came a letter from Cadiz. Lorenza was there, alone with her child. Her husband

had deserted her in England, and she had got back to Cadiz. We went to her, Niño and I, in our boat. We brought her back; but she was no longer Lorenza. Our grief, our love were nothing to her. She was like a woman hewn out of marble. Maria! how I hated that man! You cannot understand—you Englishmen. Though there is something in your eyes, señor, which makes me think that you too could have felt as I did.

"From Lorenza I learnt his name, and without telling her, I went across to Gibraltar. I inquired and found that he was there—there in Gibraltar. Almost within my grasp—think of that! At once I was cunning. For we are a simple people, except when we love or hate!"

"Yes," said Cartoner, speaking for the first time. "I know."

"In an hour I knew where he lived. His father was an English groom who had set up large breeding-stables in Gibraltar, and was a rich man. The son had the pretension of being a gentleman. He had been in England they told me for a year, buying stud-horses—and—and something else. He was married. Ah-ha! He had been married three years before he ever saw Lorenza, and the ceremony which had been observed in the English Church at Seville was a farce. My heart was hot within me; hot with the hatred for this man, and I sat in the Café Universal, which you know! Yes, you know everything. I sat there thinking of

how I should kill him—slowly, taking my own time—talking to him all the while.

"What I had learnt was no more than I expected. The woman (his wife), it appeared, was the daughter of a merchant at Gibraltar. They were a whole nest of Scorpions. I went back to Algeciras, and said nothing then to Lorenza. The next night I heard by chance that he and his wife and children had taken passage in a steamer that sailed for England in two days. Madre de Dio! he nearly slipped through our fingers. It was not a P. and O. ship: the passengers had to take a boat from the Old Mole, which is always crowded with Algeciras boats and others. Niño and I sailed across there and waited among the small craft. We saw the woman (his wife) and the children go on board in the afternoon. In the evening he came. I had arranged it with the licensed boatmen; a few pesetas did that. Our boat was nearest the steps. In the dim light of the quay lamp he noticed nothing, but stepped over the gunwale and mentioned the name of his steamer in a quick way, which he thought was that of the English.

"Niño took the oars, and when we were round the pier head we hoisted the sail. Then I spoke.

"'I am the father of Lorenza Roldos,' I said, 'and that man is Niño, her cortejo. We are going to kill you.'

"He started up, and was about to raise a cry, when

Niño whipped out his country knife. We carry them, you know."

"Yes," said Cartoner, speaking for the second time, "I know."

He was watching the old man now beneath the shadow of his hand.

"'If you raise your voice,' I said, 'Niño will put his knife through your throat.'

"I saw him glance sideways at the water.

"'You would have no chance that way,' I said; 'I would turn the boat on you, and run you down.'

"He gave a sort of gasp, and I had the happiness of hearing his teeth chatter.

"'I have money,' he said, in his thin, weak voice; 'not here, on board.'

"We said nothing, but I hauled in the sheet a little, and ran for the Europa light.

"'We are going to kill you,' I said quietly, without hurry.

"We landed just beyond the lighthouse, where there are no sentinels, and we made him walk up the Europa Road past the Governor's house. Niño's knife was within two inches of his throat all the while. I think he knew that his end was near. You know the Third Europa Advance Battery?"

"Yes," answered Cartoner.

"The cliff recedes there. There is a drop of four hundred metres, and then deep water."

"Yes, I know."

"It was there," hissed the old Spaniard, with a terrible gleam in his eyes. "We sat there on the low walk, and I spoke to him. As we came along, Niño had said to me in our dialect: 'With a man like this, fear is better than pain;' and I knew that he was right.

"We did not touch him with our knives. We merely spoke to him. And then we began quietly making our arrangements. That man died a hundred times in the ten minutes wherein we ballasted him. We tied heavy stones upon his body—we filled his pockets with smaller ones. We left his arms free, but to the palm of each hand we bound a stone as large as my head. The same to each foot.

"Then I said, 'Lie down! Hands and legs straight out! It is only right that a Scorpion should die from his own rock, and taking some souvenirs with him.'

"I took his arms and Niño his feet. We swung him three times, and let him fly into the darkness.

"And Lorenza never forgave us. She told me that she loved him still. One never comes to understand a woman!"

V

ON THE ROCKS

"For they are blest that have not much to rue—
That have not oft misheard the prompter's cue."

THE gale was apparently at its height—that is to say, it was blowing harder than it had blown all through the night. But those whose business is on the great waters know that a gale usually finishes its wrath in a few wild squalls. "'Tis getting puffy," the sailors say; "'tis nearly over."

A man hurrying through the narrow main street of Yport was thrown against the shutters of the little baker's shop on the left-hand side, and stood there gasping for breath.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he muttered. "It's a dog's night."

And he wiped the rain from his face. The wind, which blew from a wild north-west, roared against the towering cliffs, and from east and west concentrated itself funnel-wise on the gap where Yport lies. Out seaward there was a queer, ghostly light lying on the face of the waters—the storm-light—and landsmen

rarely see it. For the sea was beaten into unbroken foam. The man, who was clad in oilskins, was in the neck of the funnel. Overhead, he heard the wind roaring through the pines far up on the slope of the narrow valley—close at hand, a continuous whistle told of its passage across the housetops. The man steadied himself with his left hand. He had but one, and he cursed the empty sleeve which flapped across his face.

"Provided," he muttered, "that I can waken that curé."

He crept on, while the gale paused to take breath, and a moment later cowered in the porch of a little yellow house. He kicked the door with his heel and then waited, with his ear to the great keyhole. Surely the curé must have been a good man to sleep in such a night. The street had naturally been deserted, for it was nearly three o'clock in the morning, and dawn could not be far off.

"A one-armed man and a priest!" said the man to himself, with an expressive jerk of the head. And, indeed, all the men of Yport had sailed for the Northern fisheries, leaving the village to the women and children, and the maimed.

Within the house there were sounds of some one astir.

"One comes!" cried a cheery voice belonging assuredly to some one who was brave, for none expects to be called from his bed to hear good news. A single

bolt was drawn and the door thrown open. The curé —a little man—stood back, shading the candle with his hand.

"Ah, Jean Belfort! it is you."

"Yes, I and my one arm," replied the man, coming in and closing the door. The rain dripped from his oilskins to the clean floor.

"Ah, but this is no night to complain. Better be on shore with one arm than at sea with two to-night."

The little curé looked at his visitor with bright eyes, and a shake of the head. A quick-spoken man this, with a little square mouth, a soft heart, a keen sense of humour.

"Why have you got me from my bed, malcontent?" he asked.

"Because there are some out there that want your prayers," replied Belfort, jerking his head towards the sea. He was an unbeliever, this maimed sailor, who read the *Petit Journal*, and talked too loudly in the Café de la Marine of an evening. He spoke mockingly now.

"One can pray in the morning. Come with me while I get on some clothes—if it is a wreck," said the priest, simply.

The man followed him to a little bare room, of which the walls were decorated by two cheap sacred prints and a crucifix, such as may be bought for ten sous at any fair on the coast.

"Never mind your hat," said the priest, seeing the man's fingers at the strings of his sou'wester. "Give me my great boots from the cupboard. A wreck is it? The summer storms are always the worst. Is it a boat?"

"Who knows?" replied the man. "It is my wife who looked from the window an hour ago, and saw a light at sea two points to the east of north—a red light and then a green and then the masthead light."

"A steamer."

"So it would appear; and now there are no lights. That is all."

The priest was dressed, and now pulled on a great oilskin coat. There are men who seem compact in mind and body, impressing their fellows with a sense of that restfulness which comes of assured strength. This little priest was one of these, and the mental impress that he left upon all who came in contact with him was to the effect that there is nothing in a human life that need appal, no sorrow beyond the reach of consolation—no temptation too strong to be resisted. The children ran after him in the streets, their faces expectant of a joke. The women in the doorways gave a little sigh as he passed. A woman will often sigh at the thought of that which another woman has lost, and this touches a whole gamut of thoughts which are above the reach of a man's mind.

The priest tied the strings of a sou'wester under

his pink chin. He was little more than a boy after all—or else he was the possessor of a very young heart.

"Between us we make a whole man—you and I," he said cheerily. "Perhaps we can do something."

They went out into the night, the priest locking the door and pausing to hide the key under the mat in the porch. They all keep the house-door key under the mat at Yport. In the narrow street, which forms the whole village, running down the valley to the sea, they met the full force of the gale, and stood for a moment breathlessly fighting against it. In a lull they pushed on.

"And the tide?" shouted the priest.

"It is high at four o'clock—a spring tide, and the wind in the north-west—not standing room on the shore against the cliff for a man from here to Glainval."

At high tide the waves beat against the towering cliff all along this grim coast, and a man standing on the turf may not recognize his son on the rocks below, while the human voice can only span the distance in calmest weather. There are spaces of three and four miles between the gaps in the great and inaccessible bluffs. An evil lee-shore to have under one's quarter —one of the waste places of the world which Nature has set apart for her own use. When Nature speaks it is with no uncertain voice.

"There is old Loisette," shouted the curé. "He may have gone to bed sober."

"There is no reason to suppose it," shouted the man in reply. "No, my father, if there is aught to be done, you and I must do it."

What with the wind and the flannel ear-flaps of the sou'wester, it was hard to make one's self heard, and the two faces almost touched—the unbeliever who knew so little, and the priest who knew not only books but men. They made their way to the little quay, or, rather, the few yards of sea-wall that protect the houses at the corner of the street. But here they could not stand, and were forced to retire to the lee side of the Hotel de la Plage, which, as all know, stands at the corner, with two timorous windows turned seaward, and all the rest seeking the comfort of the street.

In a few words Belfort explained where the light had been seen, and where, according to his judgment, the steamer must have taken the rocks.

"If the good God has farther use for any of them, he will throw them on the shore a kilometre to the east of us, where the wire rope descends from the cliff to the shore for the seaweed," said the priest.

The other nodded.

"What must be done must be done quickly. Let us go," said the little curé in his rather bustling manner, at which the great, slow-limbed fishermen were wont to laugh.

"Where to?"

"Along the shore."

"With a rising tide racing in before a north-westerly wind?" said Belfort, grimly, and shook his head.

"Why not? You have your two legs, and there is Some One—up there!"

"I shouldn't have thought it," answered the man, glancing up at the storm-driven clouds. "However, where a priest can go a one-armed man can surely follow. We need lanterns and a bottle of brandy."

"Yes; I will wait and watch here while you fetch them."

The priest, left alone, peered round the corner, shading his eyes with his soft, white hand, upon which the cold rain pattered. To the east of him he knew that there were three miles of almost impassable shore, of unbroken, unscalable cliff. To the west of him the same. On the one hand Fécamp, five miles away by a cliff path that none would attempt by night, nine miles by road. On the other hand Etretat, still further by road and cliff path. Inland a few farms and many miles of forest. He and Belfort had stumbled over the fallen telegraph wires as they struggled down the village street. No; if there was a wreck out there in the darkness, and men, clinging half-drowned to the rigging, were looking towards the shore, they had better look elsewhere. The sea, like the wind, treated Yport as the mouth of a funnel, and a hundred cross currents were piling up such waves as no boat could

pass, though the Yport women were skilful as any man with oar or sail.

Presently Belfort returned carrying two lanterns.

"I have told her that we will not quit the sea-wall," he said with a short laugh.

And straightway they both clambered over the wall and down the iron ladder to the beach. A meandering, narrow pathway is worn on the weed-grown chalk from the village to the washing-ground on the beach, a mile to the eastward, where, at low tide, a spring of fresh water wells up amid the shingle and the rock. Along this pathway the two men made their way, the curé following on his companion's heel. They stumbled and fell many times. At every step they slipped, for their boots were soaked, and the chalk was greasy and half decomposed by the salt water. At times they paused to listen, and through the roar of the wind and sea came the distant note of a bell clanging continuously.

"It is the bell on Fécamp pier," said Belfort. "The mist is coming before the dawn."

To the east the long arm of Fécamp light swung slowly round the horizon, from the summit of the great bluff of Notre Dame du Salut, as if sweeping the sea and elbowing away all that dared approach so grim a coast.

"Ah!" exclaimed the priest, "I am in the water—the tide is coming up."

To their left a wall of foam and spray shut off all

view of the sea. On the right the cliff rose, a vast barrier, and cut the sky in two. These two men had nothing in common. They had, indeed, standing between them that sword which was brought into the world nineteen hundred years ago, and is still unsheathed. But neither thought of turning back. It had been agreed between them that they should make what speed they could along the shore, and only turn back at the last moment, searching the sea and beach as they returned in the light of dawn.

Belfort, the leader, the expert in night and tide and wind, led the way with one eye on the sea, the other on the eastern sky, which was now showing grey through tossing clouds.

"Here we must turn," he said suddenly, "and the last half-mile to the sea-wall we shall have to wade."

They paused and looked up to the sky. In half an hour the day would come, but in seventy minutes the breakers must beat against the sheer cliff.

"None has reached the shore alive and with his senses," said Belfort, looking out to sea. "He would have seen our lights and come to us, or called if he had broken limbs. It is useless to search the shore too closely. We shall find them here at the edge, half in, half out, especially those with life belts, such as we find any winter morning after bad weather."

He spoke grimly, as one who knew that it is not the deep sea that must be paid its toll, but the shoal

water where the rocks and quicksands and crabs and gulls are waiting. They made their way back in silence, and slowly a new grey day crept into life. At last they could see the horizon and read the face of the water still torn into a seething chaos of foam. There was no ship upon them. If there had been a wreck the storm had done its work thoroughly. Belfort climbed to the summit of a rock, and looked back towards Fécamp. Then he turned and searched the shore towards Yport.

"There is one," he cried, "half in, half out, as I said. We shall cheat the crabs at all events, my father."

And clambering down, he stumbled on with a reckless haste that contrasted strangely with his speech. For, whatever our words may be, a human life must ever command respect. Any may (as some have done) die laughing, but his last sight must necessarily be of grave faces.

"This one is not dead," said the priest, when they had turned the man over and dragged him to dry land. Belfort cut away the life-belt, examining it as he did so.

"No name," he said. "They will have to wait over there in London, till he can tell them what ship it was. See, he has been struck on the head. But he is alive—a marvel."

He looked up, meeting the priest's eyes, and,

remembering his words spoken under the lee of the wall of the Hotel de la Plage, he laughed as a fencer may laugh who has been touched beyond doubt by a skilful adversary.

"He is a small-made man and light enough to carry—some town mouse this, my father—who has never had a wet jacket before—see his face how white it is, and his little arms and hands. We can carry him, turn and turn about, and shall reach the sea-wall before the tide is up, provided we find no more."

It was full daylight when they at length reached the weed-grown steps at the side of the sea-wall, and the smoke was already beginning to rise from the chimneys of Yport. The gale was waning as the day came, but the sea was at its highest, and all the houses facing northward had their wooden shutters up. The waves were breaking over the sea-wall, but the two men with their senseless burden took no heed of it. They were all past thinking of salt water.

In answer to their summons, the Mother Senneville came hastily enough to the back door of the Hotel de la Plage—a small inn of no great promise. The Mother Senneville was a great woman, six feet high, with the carriage of a Grenadier, the calm eye of some ruminating animal, the soft, deep voice, and perhaps the soft heart, of a giant.

"Already!" she said simply, as she held the door back for them to pass in. "I thought there would

likely be some this morning without the money in their pockets."

"This one will not call too loud for his coffee," replied Belfort, with a cynicism specially assumed for the benefit of the curé. "And now," he added, as they laid their burden on the wine-stained table, "if he has papers that will tell us the name of the ship, I will walk to Fécamp, to Lloyds' agents there, with the news. It will be a five-franc piece in my pocket."

They hastily searched the dripping clothing, and found a crumpled envelope, which, however, told them all they desired to know. It was addressed to Mr. Albert Robinson, steamship *Ocean Waif*, Southampton.

"That will suffice," said Belfort. "I take this, and leave the rest to you and Mother Senneville."

"Send the doctor from Fécamp," said the woman—"the new one in the Rue du Bac. It is the young ones that work best for nothing, and here is no payment for any of us."

"Not now," said the priest.

"Ah!" cried Belfort, tossing off the brandy, which the Mother Senneville had poured out for him. "You —you expect so much in the Hereafter, Mr. the Curé."

"And you—you expect so much in the present, Mr. the one-armed malcontent," replied the priest, with his comfortable little laugh. "Come, Madame Senneville. Let me get this man to bed."

"It is an Englishman, of course," said the Mother Senneville, examining the placid white face. "They throw their dead about the world like cigar-ends."

By midday the news was in the London streets, and the talk was all of storms and wrecks and gallant rescues. And a few whose concern it was noted the fact that the *Ocean Waif*, of London, on a voyage from Antwerp and Southampton to the River Plate, had supposedly been wrecked off the north coast of France. Sole survivor, Albert Robinson, apparently a fireman or a steward, who lay at the Hotel de la Plage at Yport, unconscious, and suffering from a severe concussion of the brain. By midday, also, the curé was established as sick nurse in the back bedroom of the little hotel with an English conversation-book, borrowed from the schoolmaster, protruding from the pocket of his soutane, awaiting the return of Albert Robinson's inner consciousness.

"Are you feeling better?" the curé had all ready to fire off at him as soon as he awoke. To which the conversation-book made reply: "Yes, but I have caught a severe chill on the mountain," which also the curé had made ready to understand — with modifications.

But the day passed away without any use having been found for the conversation-book. And sundry persons, whose business it was, came and looked at Albert Robinson, and talked to the priest and to Jean

Belfort—who, to tell the truth, made much capital and a number of free glasses of red wine out of the incident—and went away again.

The curé passed that night on the second bed of the back bedroom of the Hotel de la Plage, and awoke only at daylight, full of self-reproach, to find his charge still unconscious, still placid like a statue, with cheeks a little hollower, and lips a little whiter. The young doctor came and shook his head, and discoursed of other cases of a similar nature which he had read up since the previous day, and pretended now to have remembered among his experiences. He also went away again, and Yport seemed to drop out of the world once more into that oblivion to which a village with such a poor sea front and no railway station, or lodging houses, or hotels where there are waiters, must expect to be consigned.

The curé had just finished his *déjeûner* of fish and an omelette—the day being Friday—when a carriage rattled down the village street, leaving behind it doorways suddenly occupied by the female population of Yport wiping its hands upon its apron.

"It is François Morin's carriage from Fécamp," said the Mother Senneville, "with a Parisienne, who has a parasol, if you please."

"No," corrected the curé; "that is an Englishwoman. I saw several last year in Rouen."

And he hurried out, hatless, conversation-book in

hand. He was rather taken aback — never having spoken to a person so well-dressed as this English girl, who nodded quickly in answer to his salutation.

"Is this the hotel? Is he here? Is he conscious yet?" she asked in tolerable French.

"Yes—madam. He is here, but he is not conscious yet. The doctor——"

"I am not madam—I am mademoiselle. I am his sister," said the girl, quickly descending from the carriage and frankly accepting the assistance of the curé's rather timid hand.

He followed her meekly, wondering at her complete self-possession—at an utter lack of ceremony—at a certain blunt frankness which was new to Yport. She nodded to Madame Senneville.

"Where is he?" she asked.

"Monsieur le Curé will show you. It is he who has saved his life."

The young lady turned and looked into the priest's pink face, which grew pinker. This was not the material of which gallant rescuers are usually made.

"Thank you, Monsieur le Curé," she said, with a sudden gentleness. "Thank you. It is so difficult—is it not?—to thank any one."

"There is not the necessity," murmured the little curé, rather confusedly; and he led the way upstairs.

Once in the sick-room he found his tongue again, and explained matters volubly enough. Besides, she

made it easy. She was so marvellously natural, so free from a certain constraint which in some French circles is mistaken for good manners. She asked every detail, and made particular inquiry as to who had seen the patient.

"No one must be allowed to see him," she said, in her decisive way. "He must be kept quite quiet. No one must approach this room, only you and I, Monsieur le Curé."

"Yes, mademoiselle," he said slowly. "Yes."

"You have been so good—you have done such wonders, that I rely upon you to help me;" and a sudden, sharp look of anxiety swept across her face. "We shall be good friends—*n'est ce pas?*" she said, turning to look at him as he stood near the door.

"It will be easy, I think, mademoiselle."

Then he turned to Madame Senneville, who was carrying the baggage upstairs.

"It is his sister, Madame Senneville," he said. "She will, of course, stay in the hotel."

"Yes, and I have no room ready," replied the huge woman, pessimistically. "One never knows what a summer storm may bring to one."

"No, Mother Senneville, no; one never knows," he said rather absently, and went out into the street. He was thinking of the strange young person upstairs, who was unlike any woman he had met or imagined. Those in her station in life whom he had seen during

his short thirty years were mostly dressed-up dolls, to whom one made banal remarks without meaning. The rest were almost men, doing men's work, leading a man's life.

That same evening the injured man recovered consciousness, and it was the curé who sent off the telegram to the doctor at Fécamp. For the wire had been repaired with the practical rapidity with which they manage such affairs in France.

Through the slow recovery it was the curé who was ever at the beck and call of the two strangers, divining their desires, making quite easy a situation which otherwise might have been difficult enough. Not only the curé, but the whole village soon became quite reconciled to the hitherto unheard-of position assumed by this young girl, without a guardian or a chaperon, who lived a frank, fearless life among them, making every day terrible assaults upon that code of feminine behaviour which hedges Frenchwomen about like a wall.

In the intimacy of the sick-room the little priest soon learnt to talk with the Englishwoman and her brother quite freely, as man to man, as he had talked to his bosom friend by selection at St. Omer. And there was in his heart that ever-abiding wonder that a woman may thus be a companion to a man, sharing his thoughts, nay, divining them before he had shaped them in his own mind. It was all very wonderful and new

to this little priest, who had walked, as it were, on one side of the street of life since boyhood without a thought of crossing the road.

When the three were together they were merry enough; indeed, the Englishman's mistakes in French were sufficient to cause laughter in themselves without that re-action which lightens the atmosphere of a sick-room when the danger is past. But while he was talking to the Mother Senneville downstairs, or waiting a summons to come up, the curé never heard laughter in the back bedroom. There seemed to be some shadow there which fled before his cheery smile when he went upstairs. When he and the girl were together when she walked on the sea-wall with him for a breath of air, she was grave enough too, as if now that she knew him better she no longer considered it necessary to assume a light-heartedness she did not feel.

"Are you sure there is nothing I can do to make your life easier here?" he asked suddenly one day.

"Quite sure," she answered without conviction.

"Have you all that you want, mademoiselle?"

"Oh yes."

But he felt that there was some anxiety weighing upon her. He was always at or near the Hotel de la Plage now, so that she could call him from the window or the door. One day—a day of cloud and drizzle, which are common enough at Yport in the early summer—he went into the little front room, which

the Mother Senneville fondly called her *salon*, to read the daily office from the cloth-bound book he ever carried in his pocket. He was engaged in this devout work when the Englishwoman came hastily into the room, closing the door and standing with her back against it.

"There is a gendarme in the street," she said, in little more than a whisper, her eyes glittering. She was breathless.

"What of it, mademoiselle? It is my old friend the Sergeant Grall. It is I who christen his children."

"Why is he here?"

"It is his duty, mademoiselle. The village is peaceful enough now that the men are away at the fisheries. You have nothing to fear."

She glanced round the room with a hunted look in her eyes.

"Oh," she said, "I cannot keep it up any longer. You must have guessed—you who are so quick—that my brother is a great criminal. He has ruined thousands of people. He was escaping with the money he had stolen when the steamer was wrecked."

The curé did not say whether this news surprised him or not, but walked to the window and looked thoughtfully out to sea. The windows were dull and spray-ridden.

"Ah!" the girl cried, "you must not judge hastily. You cannot know his temptation."

"I will not judge at all, mademoiselle. No man may judge of another's temptation. But—he can restore the money."

"No. It was all lost in the steamer."

She had approached the other window, and stood beside the little priest looking out over the grey sea.

"It was surely my duty to come here and help him, whatever he had done."

"Assuredly, mademoiselle."

"But he says you can give him up if you like."

She glanced at him and caught her breath. The priest shook his head.

"Why not? Because you are too charitable?" she whispered; and again he shook his head. "Then, why not?" she persisted with a strange pertinacity.

"Because he is your brother, mademoiselle."

And they stood for some moments looking out over the sea, through the rime-covered windows, in a breathless silence. The curé spoke at length.

"You must get him removed to Havre," he said, in his cheery way, "as soon as possible. There he can take a steamer to America. I will impress upon the doctor the necessity of an early departure."

It was not lately, but many years ago, that the *Ocean Waif* was wrecked in a summer storm. And any who penetrate to Yport to-day will probably see in the sunlight on the sea-wall a cheery little curé, who

taps his snuff-box, while he exchanges jokes with the idlers there. Yport has slowly crept into the ken of the traveller, and every summer sees English tourists pass that way. They are not popular with the rough natives, who, after all, are of the same ancestry as ourselves; but the little curé is quick and kind with information or assistance to all who seek it. When the English tongue is spoken he draws near and listens —snuff-box in hand; when the travellers speak in French his eyes travel out to sea with a queer look, as if the accent aroused some memory.

And in an obscure English watering-place there lives a queer little old maid—churchy and prim—who does charitable work, gives her opinion very freely concerning the administration of matters parochial, thinks the vicar very self-indulgent and idle—and in her own heart has the abiding conviction that there are none on earth like the Roman clergy.

VI

"GOLOSSA-A-L"

"GOLOSSA-A-L!" I heard him say. "Golossa-a-l, these Englishmen! Are they not everywhere?"

A moment later I was introduced to him, and he rose to shake hands—a tall, fair, good-natured German student. Heavy if you will—but clean withal, and of a cleanly mind.

"Honour," he muttered politely. "It is not often we have an English student at Göttingen—but perhaps we can teach you something—eh?" And he broke into a boyish laugh. "You will take beer?" he added, drawing forward an iron chair—for we were in the Brauerei Garden.

"Thank you."

"A doctor of medicine—the Herr Professor tells me," he said pleasantly. "Prosit," he added, as he raised his great mug to his lips.

"Prosit? Yes, a doctor of medicine—of the army."

"Ah, of the army, that is good. I also I hope,

some day! And you come to pass our Göttingen examination. Yes, but it is hard—*ach Gott!*—devilish hard."

There was a restrained shyness about the man which I liked. Shy men are so rare. And, although he could have cleared the Brauerei Garden in five minutes, there was no bluster about this Teutonic Hercules. His loud, good-natured laugh was perhaps the most striking characteristic of Carl von Mendebach. Next to that, his readiness to be surprised at everything or anything, and to class it at once as colossal. Hence the nickname by which he was known amongst us. The term was applied to me a thousand times—figuratively. For I am a small man, as I have had reason to deplore more than once while carrying the wounded out of action. It takes so much longer if one is small.

I cannot exactly say why Carl von Mendebach and I became close friends; but I do not think that Lisa von Mendebach had anything to do with it. I was never in love with Lisa, although I admired her intensely, and I never see a blue-eyed, fair-haired girl to this day without thinking of Lischen. But I was not in love with her. I was never good-looking. I did not begin by expecting much from the other sex, and I have never been in love with anybody. I wonder if Lisa remembers me.

The students were pleasant enough fellows. It

must be recollected that I speak of a period dating back before the war of 1870—before there was a German Empire. I soon made a sort of place for myself at the University, and I was tolerated good-naturedly. But Carl did more than tolerate me. He gave me all the friendship of his simple heart. Without being expansive—for he was a Hanoverian—he told me all about himself, his thoughts and his aims, an open-hearted ambition and a very Germanic contentment with a world which contained beer and music. Then at last he told me all about his father, General von Mendebach, and Lisa. Finally he took me to his house one evening to supper.

"Father," he said in his loud, cheery way, "here is the Englishman—a good friend of mine—a great scholar—golossa-a-l."

The General held out his hand and Lisa bowed, prettily formal, with a quaint, prim smile which I can see still.

I went to the house often—as often, indeed, as I could. I met the Von Mendebachs at the usual haunts—the theatre, an occasional concert, the band on Sunday afternoon, and at the houses of some of the professors. It was Lisa who told me that another young Briton was coming to live in Göttingen—not, however, as a student at the University. He turned out to be a Scotsman—one Andrew Smallie, the dissolute offspring of a prim Edinburgh family. He

had been shipped off to Göttingen, in the hope that he might there drink himself quietly to death. The Scotch do not keep their skeletons at home in a cupboard. They ship them abroad and give them facilities.

Andrew Smallie soon heard that there was an English student in Göttingen, and, before long, procured an introduction. I disliked him at once. I took good care not to introduce him to any friends of mine.

"Seem to lead a quiet life here," he said to me one day when I had exhausted all conversation and every effort to get him out of my rooms.

"Very," I replied.

"Don't you know anybody? It's a deuced slow place. I don't know a soul to talk to except yourself. Can't take to these beer-drinking, sausage-eating Germans, you know. Met that friend of yours, Carl von Mendebach, yesterday, but he didn't seem to see me."

"Yes," I answered. "It is possible he did not know you. You have never been introduced."

"No," he answered dubiously. "Shouldn't think that would matter in an out-of-the-way place like this."

"It may seem out of the way to you," I said, without looking up from my book. "But it does not do so to the people who live here."

"D——d slow lot, I call them," he muttered. He

lighted a cigar and stood looking at me for some time and then he went away.

It was about this time that Carl von Mendebach fought his first student duel, and he was kind enough to ask me to be his surgeon. It was, of course, no quarrel of his own, but a point of honour between two clubs; and Carl was selected to represent his "corps." He was delighted, and the little slit in his cheek which resulted from the encounter gave him infinite satisfaction. I had been elected to the "corps" too, and wore my cap and colours with considerable pride. But, being an Englishman, I was never asked to fight. I did not then, and I do not now, put forward any opinion on student duelling. My opinion would make no difference, and there is much to be said on both sides.

It was a hard winter, and I know few colder places than Göttingen. An ice fête was organized by the University. I believe Carl and I were among the most energetic of the organizers. I wish I had never had anything to do with it.

I remember to this day the pleasure of skating with Lisa's warmly gloved little hands in my own—her small furred form touching me lightly each time we swung over to the left on the outside edge. I saw Andrew Smallie once or twice. Once he winked at me, knowingly, as I passed him with Lisa—and I hated him for it. That man almost spoilt Göttingen for me. Britons are no friends of mine out of their own country.

They never get over the fallacy that everywhere except London is an out-of-the-way place where nothing matters.

As the evening wore on, some of the revellers became noisy in a harmless German way. They began to sing part songs with a skill which is not heard out of the Fatherland. Parties of young men and maidens joined hands and swung round the lake in waltz time to the strain of the regimental band.

Lisa was tired, so she sought a seat with the General, leaving Carl and me to practise complicated figures. They found a seat close to us—a seat somewhat removed from the lamps. In the dusk it was difficult to distinguish between the townspeople and the gentlefolk.

We were absorbed in our attempts when I heard a voice I knew—and hated.

"Here, you, little girl in the fur jacket—come and have a turn with me," it was saying in loud, rasping, intoxicated tones.

I turned sharply. Smallie was standing in front of Lisa with a leer in his eyes. She was looking up at him—puzzled, frightened—not understanding English. The General was obesely dumfounded.

"Come along—my dear," Andrew Smallie went on. He reached out his hand, and, grasping her wrist, tried to drag her towards him.

Then I went for him. I am, as I have confessed, a

small man. But if a man on skates goes for another, he gathers a certain impetus. I gave it to him with my left, and Andrew Smallie slid along the ice after he had fallen.

The General hustled Lisa away, muttering oaths beneath his great white moustache.

When Andrew Smallie picked himself up, Carl von Mendebach was standing over him.

"Tell him," said Carl in German, "that that was my sister."

I told Smallie.

Then Carl von Mendebach slowly drew off his fur glove and boxed Smallie heavily on the ear so that he rolled over sideways.

"Golossa-a-l," muttered Von Mendebach, as we went away hurriedly together.

The next morning Carl sent an English-speaking student with a challenge to Andrew Smallie. I wrote a note to my compatriot, telling him that although it was not our habit in England, he would do well to accept the challenge or to leave Göttingen at once.

Carl stood over me while I wrote the letter.

"Tell him," he said, "where he can procure fencing lessons."

I gave Smallie the name of the best fencing-master in Göttingen. Then we called for beer and awaited the return of our messenger. The student came back looking grave and pale.

"He accepts," he said. "But——"

"Well!" we both exclaimed.

"He names pistols."

"What?" I cried.

Carl laughed suddenly. We had never thought of such a thing. Duelling with pistols is forbidden. It is never dreamt of among German students.

"Ah—all right!" said Carl. "If he wishes it."

I at once wrote a note to Smallie, telling him that the thing was impossible. My messenger was sent back without an answer. I wrote, offering to fight Carl myself with the usual light sword or the sabre, in his name and for him. To this I received no answer. I went round to his rooms and was refused admittance.

The next morning at five—before it was light—Carl and I started off on foot for a little forest down by the river. At six o'clock Andrew Smallie arrived. He was accompanied by an Einjähriger—a German who had lived in England before he came home to serve his year in the army.

We did not know much about it. Carl laughed as I put him in position. The fresh pink of his cheek—like the complexion of a healthy girl—never faded for a moment.

"When I've done with him," cried Smallie, "I'll fight you."

We placed our men. The German soldier gave the word. Carl von Mendebach went down heavily.

He was still smiling—with a strange surprise on his simple face.

"Little man," he said, "he has hit me."

He lay quite still while I quickly loosened his coat. Then suddenly his breath caught.

"Golossa-a-l!" he muttered.

His eyes glazed. He was dead.

I looked up and saw Smallie walking quickly away alone. The Einjähriger was kneeling beside me.

I have never seen or heard of Andrew Smallie since. I am a grey-haired man now. I have had work to do in every war of my day. I have been wounded—I walk very lame. But I still hope to see Andrew Smallie—perhaps in a country where I can hold him to his threat; if it is only for the remembrance of five minutes that I had with Lisa when I went back to Göttingen that cold winter morning.

VII

THE MULE

"Si je vis, c'est bien; si je meurs, c'est bien."

"AI-I-IEAH," the people cried, as Juan Quereno passed —the cry of the muleteers, in fact. And this was considered an excellent joke. It had been a joke in the country-side for nearly twenty years; one of perhaps half a dozen, for the uneducated mind is slow to comprehend, and slower to forget. Some one had nicknamed Juan Quereno the "Mule" when he was at school, and Spain, like Italy and parts of Provence, is a country where men have two names—the baptismal, and the so-called. Indeed, the custom is so universal, that official records must needs take cognizance of it, and grave Government papers are made out in the name of so-and-so, "named the monkey."

There were, after all, worse by-names in the village than the Mule, which is, as many know, a willing enough beast if taken the right way. If taken in the wrong—well, one must not take him in the wrong way, and there is an end of it! A mule will suddenly stop

because, it would appear, he has something on his mind and desires to think it out then and there. And the man who raises a stick is, of course, a fool. Any one knows that. There is nothing for it but to stand and watch his ears, which are a little set back, and cry, "Ai-i-ieah," patiently and respectfully, until the spirit moves him to go on. And then the mule will move on, slowly at first, without enthusiasm, a quality which, by the way, is, of all the animals, only to be found in the horse and the dog.

The quick-witted who had dealings with Quereno knew, therefore, by his name what manner of man this was, and dealt with him accordingly. Juan Quereno was himself a muleteer, and in even such a humble capacity as scrambling behind a beast of burden over a rocky range of mountains and through a stream or two, a man may make for himself a small reputation in his small world. Juan Quereno was, namely, a Government muleteer, and carried the mails over nineteen chaotic miles of rock and river. When the mails were delayed owing, it was officially announced, to heavy snow or rain in the mountains, the delay never occurred on Quereno's *étapa*.

For nine years, winter and summer, storm and shine, he got his mails through, backwards and forwards, sleeping one night at San Celoni, the next at Puente de Rey. Such was Juan Quereno, "a stupid enough fellow," the democratic schoolmaster of San Celoni

said, with a shrug of his shoulders and a wave of the cigarette which he always carried half-smoked and unlighted in his fingers.

The schoolmaster was, nevertheless, pleasant enough when the Mule, clean-shaven and shy, with a shrinking look in his steady, black eyes, asked one evening if he could speak to him alone.

"But yes—*amigo!*" he replied; "but yes." And he drew aside on the bench that stands at the schoolhouse door. "Sit down."

The Mule sat down, leant heavily against the wall, and thrust out first one heavy foot and then the other. Then he sat forward with his elbows on his knees, and looked at his dusty boots. His face was tanned a deep brown—a stolid face—not indicative of much intelligence perhaps, not spiritual, but not bad on the other hand, which is something in a world that abounds in bad faces. He glanced sideways at the schoolmaster, and moistened his lips with his tongue, openly, after the manner of the people.

"It is about Caterina, eh?" inquired the elder man.

"Yes," replied the Mule, with a sort of gasp. If the Mule had ever been afraid in his life, it was at that moment—afraid, if you please, of a little democrat of a schoolmaster no bigger than the first-class boys, blinking through a pair of magnifying spectacles which must have made the world look very large, if

one could judge from the effect that they had upon his eyes.

The schoolmaster looked up towards the mountains, to the goats poised there upon the broken ground, seeking a scanty herbage in the crannies.

"How many beasts is it that you have—four or five?" he inquired kindly enough, after a moment, and the Mule drew a deep breath.

"Five," he replied; and added, after a minute's deep and honest thought, "and good ones, except Cristofero Colon, the big one. He eats much, and yet, when the moment comes"—he paused and looked towards the mountains, which rose like a wall to the south, a wall that the Mule must daily climb—"when the moment comes he will sometimes refuse—especially in an east wind."

The schoolmaster smiled, thinking perhaps of that other Cristofero Colon and the east wind that blew him to immortal fame.

"And Caterina," he asked. "What does she think of it?"

"I don't know."

The schoolmaster looked at his companion with an upward jerk of the head. It was evident that he thought him a dull fellow. But that assuredly was Caterina's affair. It was, on the other hand, distinctly the affair of Caterina's father to remember those five beasts of the Mule's, than which there were none

better in the country-side—to recollect that the Mule himself had a good name at his trade, and was trusted by the authorities. There was no match so good in all the valley, and certainly none to compare with this dull swain in the accursed village of San Celoni. The schoolmaster never spoke of the village without a malediction. He had been planted there in his youth with a promise of promotion, and promotion had never come. For a man of education it was exile—no newspapers, no passing travellers at the Café. The nearest town was twenty miles away over the Sierra Nevada, and Malaga—the paved Paradise of his rural dreams—forty rugged miles to the south. No wonder he was a democrat, this disappointed man. In a Republic, now, such as his father had schemed for in the forties, he would have succeeded. A Republic, it must be remembered, being a community in which every man is not only equal, but superior to his neighbour.

"You don't know?"

"No," answered the Mule, with a dull look of shame at his own faint-heartedness. Moreover, he was assuredly speaking an untruth. The man who fears to inquire—knows.

As a matter of fact, he had hardly spoken to Caterina. Conversation was not the Mule's strong point. He had exchanged the usual greetings with her at the fountain on a *fiesta* day. He had nodded a good morning to her, gruff and curt (for the Mule

had no manners), more times than he could count. And Caterina had met his slow glance with those solemn eyes of hers, and that, so to speak, had settled the Mule's business. Just as it would have settled the business of five out of six men. For Caterina had Moorish eyes—dark and solemn and sad, which said a hundred things that Caterina had never thought of—which seemed to have some history in them that could hardly have been Caterina's history, for she was only seventeen. Though, as to this, one cannot always be sure. Perhaps the history was all to come. Of course, the Mule knew none of these things. He was a hard-working, open-air Andalusian, and only knew that he wanted Caterina, and, as the saying is, could not live without her. Meantime he lived on from day to day without that which he wanted, and worked—just as the reader may be doing. That, in fact, is life—to live on without something or other, and work. Than which there is one thing worse, namely, to live on and be idle.

"But—" said the schoolmaster, slowly, for Andalusian tongues are slow, if the knives are quick—"but one may suppose that you would make her a good husband."

And a sudden gruff laugh was the answer. A woman would have understood it; but Caterina had no mother. And the schoolmaster was thinking of the five beasts and the postal appointment. The

muleteer's face slowly sank back into stolidity again. The light that had flashed across it had elevated that dull physiognomy for a moment only.

"Yes," said the Mule slowly, at length.

"You can read and write?" inquired the man of education.

"Yes, but not quickly!"

"That," said the schoolmaster, "is a matter of practice. You should read the newspapers."

Which was bad advice, for the Mule was simple and might have believed what he read.

The conversation was a long one; that is to say, it lasted a long time; until, indeed, the sun had set and the mountains had faded from blue to grey, while the far-off snow peaks reared their shadowy heads into the very stars. The schoolmaster had a few more questions to ask, and the Mule answered them in monosyllables. He was tired, perhaps, after his day's journey; for he had come the northward trip, which was always the hardest, entailing as it did a rocky climb on the sunny side of the mountains. He had nothing to say in his own favour, which is not such a serious matter as some might suspect. The world does not always take us at our own valuation, which is just as well—for the world.

Indeed, the schoolmaster only succeeded in confirming his own suspicion that this was nothing but a dull fellow, and he finally had to dismiss the Mule,

who had not even the *savoir faire* to perceive when a conversation was ended.

"*Vederemos*," he said, judicially, "we shall see."

And the Mule went away with that heaviness of heart which must surely follow a mean action. For he knew that in applying to Caterina's father he had placed Caterina at a disadvantage. The schoolmaster, be it remembered, was a democrat, and such are usually autocrats in their own house. He was, moreover, a selfish man, and had long cherished the conviction that he was destined to be great. He thought that he was an orator, and that gift, which is called by those who do not possess it the gift of the gab, is the most dangerous that a man can have. There was no one in San Celoni to listen to him. And if Caterina were married and he were a free man, he could give up the school and go to Malaga, where assuredly he could make a name.

So the schoolmaster told Caterina the next morning that she was to marry the Mule—that the matter was settled. The dusky roses faded from Caterina's cheek for a moment, and her great dark eyes had a hunted look. That look had often come there of late. The priest had noticed it, and one or two old women.

"Almost as if she were in the mountains," they said, which is a local polite way of referring to those unfortunate gentlemen who, for some reason or another, do not desire to meet the Guardia Civil,

and haunt the upper slopes of the Sierra Nevada, where they live, as live the beasts of the forest, seeking their meat from God, while the charitable, and, it is even whispered, the priest or the Alcalde himself, will at times lay an old coat or a loaf of bread at the roadside above the village, and never inquire who comes to take it.

The Mule himself, it is known, buys more matches than he can ever burn, so much as six boxes at a time, of those cheap sulphurous wooden matches that are made at Barcelona, and the next day will buy more. The Mule, however, is such a silent man that those who are "in the mountains" make no concealment with him, but meet him (wild, unkempt figures that appear quietly from behind a great rock) as he passes on his journeys, and ask him if he has a match upon him. They sometimes look at the mail-bags slung across the stubborn back of Cristofero Colon with eyes that have the hunted, hungry look which Caterina has.

"There is, perhaps, money in there," they say.

"Perhaps," answers the Mule, without afterthought.

"It may be a thousand pesetas."

"Perhaps."

And the Mule, who is brave enough where Caterina is not concerned, quietly turns his back upon a man who carries a gun, and follows Cristofero Colon. It sometimes happens that he trudges his nineteen

miles without meeting any one, with no companion but his mules and his dog. This last-named animal is such as may be met in Spain or even in France, at any street corner—not a retriever, nor a foxhound, nor anything at all but a dog as distinguished from a cat or a goat, living a troubled and uncertain life in a world that will always cringe to a pedigree, but has no respect for nondescripts. It was on these journeys that the Mule had so much leisure for thought. For even he could think, according to his dim lights. He was only conscious, however, of an ever-increasing feeling of a sickness—a physical nausea (for he was, of course, a mere earthy-creature)—at the thought of a possible life without Caterina. And it was at the end of a grilling day that the schoolmaster beckoned to him as he passed the school-house, and told him that it was settled—that Caterina would marry him.

"Would you like to see her? She is indoors." inquired the bearer of the tidings.

"No," answered the Mule, after a dull pause. "Not to-night. I have my mail-bags, as you see."

And he clattered on down the narrow street with a dazed look, as if the brightness of Paradise had flashed across his vision.

So it was settled. Caterina and the Mule were to be married, and there had been no love-making, the old women said. "And what," they asked, "is youth for,

if there is to be no love-making?" "And God knows they were right," said the priest who heard the remark, and who was a very old man himself.

Two days after that, the Mule met Caterina as she was going to the fountain. He said "Good morning." They both stopped, and the Mule looked into Caterina's eyes and had nothing to say. For he saw something there which he did not understand, and which made him feel that he was no better than Cristofero Colon, scraping and stumbling up the narrow street with the mail-bags, in such a vile temper, by the way, that the Mule had to hurry after him.

"It is a slow business," said the schoolmaster to Sergeant Nolveda, of the Guardia Civil, who lived in San Celoni and trained one young recruit after another according to the regulations of this admirable corps. For one never meets a Guardia Civil alone, but always in company—an old head and a pair of young legs. "A slow business. He is not a lover such as I should choose were I a pretty girl like Caterina; but one can never tell with women—eh?"

Indeed, matters did not progress very quickly. The Mule appeared to take so much for granted—to take as said so much that had not been said. Even the love-making seemed to him to have been understood, and he appeared to be quite content to go his daily journeys with the knowledge that Caterina was to be his wife. There were, of course, others in the valley

who would have been glad enough to marry Caterina, but she had shown no preference for any of these swains, who knew themselves inferior, in a worldly sense, to the Mule. So the whole country-side gradually accustomed itself also to the fact that Caterina was to marry Quereno. The news even spread to the mountains. The Mule heard of it there one day when he had accomplished fourteen daily journeys to the accompaniment of this new happiness.

As he was nearing the summit of the pass he saw Pedro Casavel, who had been "in the mountains" three years, seated on a stone awaiting him. Pedro Casavel was a superior man, who had injured another in a dispute originating in politics. His adversary was an old man, now stricken with a mortal disease. And it was said that Pedro Casavel could safely return to the village, where his father owned a good house and some land. His enemy had forgiven him, and would not prosecute. But Casavel lingered in the mountains, distrusting so Christian a spirit.

He rose as the Mule slowly approached. He carried a gun always, and was more daring than his companions in retreat. The Mule mechanically sought in his jacket pocket for a box of matches, which he knew would be a welcome gift, and held them out silently as he neared Casavel. But Casavel did not take them.

"I hear that you are to marry Caterina," he said, with half disdainful laugh. "Is it true?"

"It is true," answered the Mule.

"If you do," cried the other, passionately, with a bang on the stock of his gun that startled Cristofero Colon—"if you do, I will shoot you."

The Mule smiled slowly, just as he smiled when the people cried "Ai-i-ieah" as he passed them.

"I am going to marry her," he said, with a shake of the head. And mechanically he handed the other the box of matches, which Casavel took, though his eyes still flashed with anger and that terrible jealousy which flows in Southern blood. Then the Mule walked slowly on, while his dog shambled after him, turning back once or twice to glance apprehensively at the man left standing in the middle of the rocky path. Dogs, it is known, have a keener scent than human beings—perhaps, also, they have a keener vision, and see more written on the face of man than we can perceive.

The Mule turned at the summit of the pass, and looked down, as he always did, at the village where Caterina lived, before turning his face to the sunnier southern slope. He saw Casavel standing where he had left him, holding up the gun with a threatening gesture. The Mule had no eye for effect. He did not even shrug his shoulders.

It was finally the schoolmaster who hurried matters to their natural conclusion. By his advice, the Mule,

who had hitherto lodged in the house of the postmaster, rented a cottage of his own and bought some simple furniture. He consulted Caterina on several points, and she was momentarily aroused from a sort of apathy which had come over her of late, by a very feminine interest in the kitchen fittings. The best that could be said for Caterina was that she was resigned. As for the Mule, like the animal from which he had acquired his habits of thought as well as his name, he seemed to expect but little from life. So, one morning before departing on his daily journey, the Mule was unobtrusively married to Caterina in the little pink stucco chapel that broods over the village of San Celoni like a hen over her chickens. And Cristofero Colon and the dog waited outside.

It was a commonplace ceremony, and at its conclusion the bridegroom trudged off up the village street behind his mail-bags. The Mule, it must be admitted, was a deadly dull person—*y nada mas*—and nothing more, as his fond father-in-law observed at the café that same morning.

But when he returned on the second evening, he made it evident that he had been thinking of Caterina in his absence, for he gave her, half shyly and very awkwardly, some presents that he had brought from a larger village than San Celoni, which he had passed on his way. There were shops in the village, and it was held in the district that articles bought there

were of superior quality to such as came even from Granada or Malaga. The Mule had expended nearly a peseta on a coloured kerchief such as women wear on their heads, and a brooch of blue glass.

"Thank you," said Caterina, taking the presents and examining them with bright eyes. She stood before him in a girlish attitude, folding the kerchief across her hand, and holding it so that the light of their new lamp fell upon it. "It is very pretty."

The Mule had washed his face and hands at the fountain, as he came into San Celoni, remembering that he was a bridegroom. He stood, sleek and sunburnt, looking down at her, and, if he had only had the words, the love-making might have commenced then and there, at a point where the world says it usually ends.

"There was nothing," he said slowly at length, "in the shops that seemed to me pretty at all——" He paused, and turned away to lay his beret aside, then, with his back towards her, he finished the sentence. "Not pretty enough for you."

Caterina winced, as if he had hurt instead of pleased her. She busied herself with the preparations for their simple supper, and the Mule sat silently watching her—as happy, perhaps, in his dull way, as any king has ever been. Then suddenly Caterina's fingers began to falter, and she placed the plates on the table with a clatter, as if her eyes were blinded. She hesitated,

and with a sort of wail of despair, sat down and hid her face in her apron. And the Mule's happiness was only human after all, for it was transformed in the twinkling of an eye into abject misery.

He sat biting his lip, and looking at her as she sobbed. Then at length he rose slowly, and, going to her, laid his great, solid, heavy hand upon her shoulder. But he could not think of anything to say. He could only meet this as he had met other emergencies, with that silence which he had acquired from the dumb beasts amid the mountains.

At length, after a long pause, he spoke. He had detected a movement, made by Caterina and instantly restrained, to withdraw from the touch of his hand, and this had set his slow brain thinking. He had dealt with animals more than with men, and was less slow to read a movement than to understand a word.

"What is it?" he asked. "Is it that you are sorry you married me?"

And Caterina, who belonged to a people saying yea, yea, and nay, nay, nodded her head.

"Why?" asked the Mule, with a deadly economy of words. And she did not answer him. "Is it because —there is another man?"

It was known in the valley that the Mule had never used his knife, not even in self-defence. Caterina did not dare, however, to answer him. She only whispered a prayer to the Virgin.

"Is it Pedro Casavel?" asked the Mule; and the question brought her to her feet, facing him with white cheeks.

"No—no—no!" she cried. "What made you think that? Oh—no!"

Woman-like, she thought she could fool him. The Mule turned away from her and sat down again. Woman-like, she had forgotten her own danger at the mere thought that Casavel might suffer.

"And he—in the mountains," said the Mule, thinking aloud. He was beginning to see now, at last, when it was too late, as better men than he have done before, and will continue to do hereafter. Caterina could not have held out as an objection to her marriage the fact that she loved a man who was in the mountains. The schoolmaster was not one to listen to such an argument as that, especially from a girl who could not know her own mind. For the schoolmaster was, despite his radical tendencies, bigotted in his adherence to the old mistakes.

Caterina might have told the Mule, perhaps, if he had asked her; for she knew that he was gentle even with the stubborn Cristofero Colon. But he had not asked her, failing the necessary courage to face the truth.

It was, of course, the woman who spoke first, in a quiet voice, with that philosophy of life which is better understood by women than by men.

"You must, at all events, eat," she said, "after your journey. It is a *cocida* that I have made."

She busied herself among the new kitchen utensils with movements hardly yet as certain as the movements of a woman, but rather those of a child, hasty and yet deft enough. The Mule watched her, seated clumsily, with round shoulders, in the attitude of a field labourer indoors. When the steaming dish, which smelt of onions, was set upon the table, he rose and dragged his chair forward. He did not think of setting a chair in place for Caterina, who brought one for herself, and they sat down—to their wedding feast.

They appeared to accept the situation, as the poor and the hard-worked have to accept the many drawbacks to their lot, without further comment. The Mule cultivated a more complete silence than hitherto; but he was always kind to Caterina, treating her as he would one of his beasts which had been injured, with a mutual silent acceptance of the fact that she had a sorrow, a weak spot as it were, which must not be touched. With a stolid tact he never mentioned the mountains, or those unfortunate men who dwelt therein. If he met Pedro Casavel he did not mention the encounter to Caterina. Neither did he make any reference to Caterina when he gave Pedro a box of matches. Indeed, he rarely spoke to Casavel at all, but nodded and passed on his way. If Casavel approached from behind he stopped without looking

round, and waited for him just as his mules stopped, and as mules always do when they hear any one approaching from behind.

So time went on, and the schoolmaster, resigning his situation, departed to Malaga, where, by the way, he came to no good; for of talking there is too much in this world, and a wise man would not say thank you for the gift of the gab. The man whom Pedro Casavel had injured died quietly in his bed. Caterina went about her daily work with her unspoken history in her eyes, while Pedro himself no doubt ate his heart out in the mountains. That he ate it out in silence could scarcely be, for the tale got about the valley somehow that he and Caterina had been lovers before his misfortune.

And as for the Mule, he trudged his daily score of miles, and said nothing to any man. It would be hard to say whether he noticed that Pedro Casavel, when he showed himself now in the mountains, appeared rather ostentatiously without his gun—harder still to guess whether the Mule knew that as he passed across the summit Casavel would sometimes lie amid the rocks, and cover him with that same gun for a hundred yards or so, slowly following his movements with the steady barrel so that the mail-carrier's life hung, as it were, on the touch of a trigger for minutes together. Pedro Casavel seemed to shift his hiding-place, as if he were seeking to perfect certain details of light and range and

elevation. Perhaps it was only a grim enjoyment which he gathered from thus holding the Mule's life in his hand for five or six minutes two or three times a week; perhaps, after all, he was that base thing, a coward, and lacked the nerve to pull a trigger—to throw a bold stake upon life's table and stand by the result. Each day he crept a little nearer, grew more daring; until he noticed a movement made by the lank, ill-fed dog, that seemed to indicate that the beast, at all events, knew of his presence in the rocks above the footpath.

Then one day, when there was no wind, and the light was good and the range had been ascertained, Pedro Casavel pulled the trigger. The report and a puff of bluish smoke floated up to heaven, where they were doubtless taken note of, and the Mule fell forward on his face.

"I have it," he muttered, in the curt, Andalusian dialect. And then and there the Mule died.

It happened to be Cristofero Colon's day to do the southward journey, and despite the lank dog's most strenuous efforts, he continued his way, gravely carrying the dusty mail-bags to their destination. The dog remained behind with the Mule, pessimistically sniffing at his clothing, recognizing, no doubt, that which, next to an earthquake, is the easiest thing to recognize in nature. Then at length he turned homewards, towards San Celoni, with hanging ears and a loose tail. He probably suspected that the Mule had long stood

between him and starvation—that none other would take his place or remember to feed a dog of so unattractive an appearance and no pedigree whatever.

Caterina did not expect the Mule to return that evening, which was his night away from home at Puente de Rey. She hurried to the door, therefore, when she heard, after nightfall, the clatter of hoofs in the narrow street, and the shuffling of iron heels at her very step. She opened the door, and in the bright moonlight saw the cocked-hats and long cloaks of the Guardia Civil. There were other men behind them, and a beast shuffled his feet as he was bidden to stand still.

"What is it?" she asked. "An accident to the Mule?"

"Not exactly that," replied the Sergeant, grimly, as he made way for two men who approached carefully, carrying a heavy weight. It was the Mule whom they brought in and laid on the table.

"Shot," said the Sergeant, curtly. He had heard the gossip of the valley, and doubted whether Caterina would need much pity or consideration. His companion-in-arms now appeared, leading by the sleeve one who was evidently his captive. Caterina looked up and met his eyes. It was Pedro Casavel, sullen, ill-clad, half a barbarian, with the seal of the mountains upon him. "The mail-bags are missing," pursued the Sergeant, who in a way was the law-giver of the valley.

"Robbery was doubtless the object. We shall find the mail-bags among the rocks. The Mule must have shown fight; for his pistol was in his pocket with one barrel discharged."

As he spoke he laid his hand upon the Mule's broad chest without heeding the stained shirt. That stain was no new sight to an old soldier.

"Robbery," he repeated, with a glance at Casavel and Caterina, who stood one on each side of the table that bore such a grim burden, and looked at each other. "Robbery and murder. So we brought Pedro Casavel, whose hiding-place we have known these last two years, with us—on the chance, eh?—on the chance. It was the dog that came and told us. Whoever shot the man should have shot the dog too—for safety's sake."

As the Sergeant spoke, he mechanically made sure that the Mule's pockets were empty. Suddenly he stopped, and withdrew a folded paper from the inside pocket of the jacket. He turned towards the lamp to read the writing on it. It was the Mule's writing. The Sergeant turned, after a moment's thought, and faced Casavel again.

"You are free to go, Pedro," he said. "I have made a mistake, and I ask your pardon."

He held out the paper, which, however, Casaval did not take, but stood stupidly staring, as if he did not understand.

Then the Sergeant turned to the lamp again. He

unfolded the paper, which was crumpled as if with long friction in the pocket, and read aloud—

"Let no one be accused of my death. It is I, who, owing to private trouble, shall shoot myself. Juan Quereno, so-called the 'Mule.'"

VIII

IN LOVE AND WAR

"Secret de deux, secret de Dieu."

"GUESS anybody could be a soldier and swing a sword, while it takes brains to make a doctor."

Now I was a doctor, and a very young one in those days, new to the regiment and conscious of my inferiority to its merest subaltern. The young person who made the above observation was, moreover, pretty, with dark eyes and the most bewitching lips that ever gave voice to an American accent. My heart was young, and therefore easily stirred by such vanities—nothing stirs it now but the cry of the bugle and the sullen roar that rises from the ranks when, at last, T. Atkins is allowed to get to the bayonet.

We were sitting in the verandah of the Residency in the capital of a northern tributary state which need not be further specified here. The Rajah was in difficulties and unable, without our aid, to dispose of a claimant to his throne, whose hereditary right originated somewhere in the lifetime of St. Paul. General Elias

J. Watson, of Boston, U.S.A., was travelling for the enlargement of his own and his daughter's mind.

"Pa is just going to write a book about things in general," explained Miss Bertha Watson, with a wise little smile, when her father's thirst for information became irksome.

Hearing in Simla that an expeditionary force was about to be despatched to the assistance of the Rajah of Oadpur, General Watson hastened thither. He had letters of introduction from sundry persons who wished to get rid of him to sundry others who had no desire to assist in any way. But the old man's naïveté and characteristically simple interest in details soon made their way, while Bertha's wise little smile carried all before it. It somehow conveyed the impression that she knew a thing or two of which we were ignorant, and like one man we fell to desiring knowledge of those things. I was nowhere. Doctors never are anywhere in regimental competitions, for they are usually, like myself, deadly poor. Sometimes Bertha danced with me, as on this occasion, at the impromptu entertainments given by the Resident.

"Say, shall we have another?" she observed before my heart had recovered from the effect of the last remark. And she handed me the stationery department envelope which served as a programme on these occasions.

I fumbled for my pencil in a seventh heaven of joy.

I had read somewhere that women sometimes give their hearts to small and insignificant men. But it seemed unlikely that this referred to such women as Bertha Watson. I had never dreamt of cutting out the other men: Major Le Mesurier-Groselin, who had money, for instance, or Austin Graham—especially Austin Graham. There had been a rumour in the air—planted there, no doubt, by some of the women who have a marvellous scent for a light trail—that there was an understanding between Graham and Bertha. I noticed that she never looked at him with her bewitching little smile as she did at the rest of us. But that was all I could detect. Perhaps she thought that he was wiser than herself. Perhaps, moreover, she was right; for Graham was the wisest man up there, and I think the bravest. He meant business, he told me, and had come to make his name in this little war.

He was a quiet-going, fair man, with that inestimable advantage of looking at all times exactly what he was, namely, a gentleman by long descent. He was a great friend of mine, and we shared quarters in a sort of gatehouse to the Rajah's palace, where I knew that he worked night and day, for he was chief of the staff, and had a great scheme of crushing the insurrection, at one blow, by a surprise assault of the fortified town twenty miles away, where the claimant lay with his forces.

"Seems to me," said Bertha, when I had duly inscribed my name on the Government envelope, "that

this is what you call a demonstration in force. This is not serious war. You are not going to fight at all. Things are much too quiet and orderly—with church parade, and *soirées-dansantes*, and visiting cards."

She looked at me, and if I had had any secrets I should have told them to her then and there.

"Then you think there'll be fighting," she added, with a calmness of demeanour which was in itself unusual and fascinating enough.

She had no reason to arrive at such a conclusion, for I had not uttered a sound. I probably did not know, however, in those days that the lies requiring the minutest care are the unspoken ones.

"You see, I'm only a doctor," I answered, "and, strange to say, the Brigadier has not as yet taken me into his confidence."

"I know a lot about war," she went on after a momentary pause. She appeared to have some misgiving about one of the buttons on her long glove which she had undone and was tentatively tugging at the thread.

"May I button that?" I said hurriedly in my extreme youth, and with a palpitating courage.

"Why, yes—if you have any ambition that way." And she extended her arm towards me. "Now," she said, with a grave air of confidence which I now distrust whenever it is tried upon me, "if I was the man in charge of this show, I would just go

on like this, giving balls and private theatricals and exchanging visiting cards. This place is full of spies, of course. The very servants who wait on the General probably read all his letters and send copies of them to the enemy. The plan of campaign is probably as well known to What-'em-you-call-it Khan as it is to the Brigadier."

"No, I am sure it isn't," I interrupted; "because Graham keeps it locked up in a medical-comfort chest with his dressing-case locked, which we screwed on ourselves."

"Ah, is that so, doctor? Well, you can't be too careful, can you? As I was saying, I should convey to the spies the impression that it was only a demonstration in force. Then one night I should start off quietly, march twenty miles, and give What-'em-you-call-it Khan Hail Columbia before sunrise."

She looked at me, gave a knowing little nod of the head, and began fanning herself.

"That is my plan of campaign," she said. "You know Pa is here on purpose to see the British soldier fight. We have been waiting here a month now, and I hope you are going to ring up the curtain soon. Pa has theories about the British soldier, and although he is a General, you know he has never seen a fight. I tell him if I was a General who hadn't seen a fight, I'd just go out and sell myself cheap! What?"

"Nothing."

"I guess you spoke."

"I said you'd probably do that at any rate."

"Not cheap," she answered gravely, and then we changed the subject. So far as I recollect, we returned to the discussion of doctors and their trade, and before long I had the opportunity of airing my special hobby at that time—the study of native drugs. Miss Watson was deeply interested—at least, she made me think so, and before we parted I had promised to send round to her "diggings," as she called them, a bottle of a perfectly harmless narcotic which I had made up for the use of persons suffering from sea-sickness or toothache. I use it still, and have some always by me on service in a bottle labelled "Bertha," for there is, after all, something in a name.

I went home to my quarters rather thoughtful that night; for Bertha Watson's plan of campaign was Austin Graham's plan of campaign, and I knew that Graham was not the man to divulge so much as a hint of this secret. I know now that if a woman loves a man she knows much that he never tells her, but I was ignorant of this and many other matters at the time when I made Bertha's acquaintance.

The days dragged on and we seemed to be no nearer solving the Rajah's difficulties. There were at that time no native newspapers, and bazaar gossip, which is, by the way, surer and speedier than the most enlightened press, made up for the want. Bazaar

gossip held much the same opinion as Bertha Watson —namely, that we were only a demonstration in force. This opinion gained ground daily, and began like a hardy weed to throw out tendrils in the shape of details. We were afraid of the claimant to the throne, it seemed. We had quarrelled with the Rajah, and would not risk a defeat on his account.

Austin Graham came and went. I sometimes found mysterious natives waiting for him in our quarters. One of these natives spoke Hindustanee with a faint Scotch accent, and laughed when I told him so.

"I'm all right in the dialects though," he said, in Glasgow English, and asked for a cigarette. We sat and talked for half an hour awaiting Graham's arrival, but he never told me who he was.

One night, about midnight, I was aroused by Le Mesurier-Groselin, who was in full fighting kit and had a queer light in his eyes which was new to me, though heaven and the Horse Guards know that I have seen it often enough since.

"Get up—Sawbones!" said Le Mesurier-Groselin. "You'll be wanted at any rate, but now I want you badly. We're just off to smoke the old Khan out, and something has gone wrong with Graham. For God's sake, man, hurry up! It will be a pretty fight, and I would not miss it for worlds."

I looked at Le Mesurier-Groselin as I hauled on my

clothes. He had eight thousand a year, an Elizabethan manor in England, and the certainty of a baronetcy; but the thought of these things never brought to his eyes the light that was there now.

"What is wrong with Graham?"

"I don't know—wish I did. Can't move him. Seems quite stupid or dead drunk," answered Le Mesurier-Groselin, handing me my belt.

We hurried upstairs to the room occupied by Austin Graham, and there found him lying on the bed with his eyes almost, but not quite, shut.

"Where was he to-night—dining with you at mess?" I asked, raising one heavy lid with my finger.

"No, he dined with the Watsons."

"When did you last see him?"

"About ten o'clock at my quarters. He was coming here to change in time for the assembly at eleven forty-five—the column is just marching. I came here to hurry him up and found him like this. The whole attack is his planning. It would have been the making of him. He was to have led the ladders. Gad! what a chance the man had—and look at the poor devil now!"

I was examining Austin Graham with a thumping heart, for a queer suspicion was in my mind. Presently I ran downstairs and uncorked the bottle which I now label "Bertha." The smell was identical, and I went upstairs again.

"Help me to get him into his boots and tunic," I said.

And Le Mesurier-Groselin and I huddled the man's fighting clothes on to him by the light of a flickering candle. Le Mesurier-Groselin was a big man, and my trade had taught me a certain skill in the handling of the dead. We soon had Austin Graham in full uniform sitting up in my arms, with the helmet crammed on his head at an unseemly angle. He was perfectly insensible, but his heart went well.

"Now help me to get him on to his horse," I said.

Le Mesurier-Groselin dropped his eye-glass for the first and last time on record, and looked at me with a surprised eye and a solemn one.

"I'll obey orders," he said. "But I take it that you are very drunk or else mad."

We carried him downstairs and I climbed into Graham's saddle. Le Mesurier-Groselin lifted Graham, who must have weighed fourteen stone, into the saddle in front of me, and I rode twenty miles that night with him there. He recovered consciousness an hour before we reached the Khan's stronghold, and, as I expected, awoke, as if from sleep, refreshed and ready for any exertion. We had no time for explanations.

"You were drugged," I said, "by some native spy, who must have got wind of the intended attack to-night. I knew that the stuff would have to run its

course, so I did not physic you, but brought you along with the column."

I am glad to say he believed me.

Some one found me a restless field-artillery horse which was giving the gunners a lot of trouble, and I rode back to Oadpur alone—not having any business at the front. As I approached the old Gate House, the flutter of a white dress caught my eye. It was almost dawn, and a pink haze hung over the paddy-fields. The world had that appearance of peace and cleanliness which is left by the passage of an Indian night. My rooms were on the ground-floor, and it seemed to me that, at the sound of my horse's feet, some one had come out of them to pass up the stone stairs that led to Graham's quarters. As I slipped out of the saddle the sound of a distant cannon broke the silence of the night, and my horse, despite his forty miles accomplished in little more than five hours, pricked up his ears. I tied him up, and instead of going to my own rooms went upstairs.

Miss Watson was standing in the first room I entered. The quick tropic dawn had come, and I saw the face of a woman who had not slept.

"Major Graham's servant told me that he was ill. I have—a—a right to know how he is, and where he is," she said with her imperturbable self-possession.

"Graham is at the front," I answered, and the

sound of the cannon, dull and distant, finished the sentence for me.

Bertha Watson bit her lip to hide its quivering, and looked at me, breathing hard.

"We have rung up the curtain," I added, remembering our talk in the verandah of the Residency.

"How did he get there?"

"Across my saddle in a state of insensibility, which passed off, as I expected it would, an hour before the time fixed for the storming of the fortifications. Some one drugged him in order that he might not take part in this action. Some one who feared him—or for him. Le Mesurier-Groselin called me to him, and only we three know of it. I am the only medical man connected with the affair, and I can certify that it was a native drug that was used, and that therefore a native must have done this thing. Probably a native spy, Miss Watson, who, finding out the proposed surprise too late to warn the rebels, attempted to disorganize the force by this means. Do you understand?"

She looked at me with all her keen wits in her eyes.

"No one would ever dream that another had done it —say some one who was attached to Graham, and who, in a panic, gave way to temptation and did him a great wrong, while saving him from danger."

I stood aside as I spoke and motioned her towards the door, for the place would soon be astir.

"My!" she exclaimed. "And I reckoned you were a fool—behind that single eye-glass. It is not you that is the fool, doctor!"

Then suddenly she turned at the head of the stairs and whispered hoarsely—

"And if he is killed?"

"That is what he is paid for, Miss Watson. We can only wait and hope that he isn't."

Austin Graham was not killed, but came back with, as the Brigadier said, the Victoria Cross up his sleeve. I happened to be near Bertha Watson when they met, and there was that in her eyes when they encountered his which was a revelation to me and makes me realize even now what a lonely man I am.

IX

TOMASO'S FORTUNE

"You talk of poor men, Señora—then you talk of me. See, I have nothing but the wits that are under my hat."

And Felipe Fortis spread himself out on the trellis-bordered bench of the little Venta that stands at the junction of the Valdemosa Road and the new road from Miramar to Palma in the island of Majorca.

Felipe was, of course, known to be a young man of present position and future prospects, or he would not have said such a thing. It was supposed, indeed, by some, to be a great condescension that he should stop at the little Venta of the Break of Day and take his half of wine on market-days. And, of course, there were women who eagerly sought the woman in it, and said that Felipe drank the widow Navarro's sour wine to the bright eyes of the widow's daughter.

"No such luck for her," said Rosa's cousins and aunts, who were dotted all up the slopes of the valley on either side in their little stone cottages, right up

from the river to the Val d'Erraha—that sunny valley of repose which lies far above the capital of Majorca, far above the hum of life and sound of the restless sea.

Felipe, who was a good-looking young fellow, threw his hat down on the bench beside him. He had fair hair and a white skin—both, he understood, much admired by the dark-eyed daughters of the Baleares. He shook his finger with a playful condescension at the widow Navarro, with whom he was always kind enough to exchange a few light pleasantries. And she, woman-like, suited her fire to the calibre of the foe, for she was an innkeeper.

"That is all—the wits that are under my hat," he repeated.

And Rosa, who was standing in the deep shadow of the doorway, muttered to herself—

"Then you are indeed a poor man."

Felipe glanced towards her, and wondered whether the sun was shining satisfactorily through the trellis on his fair hair.

Rosa looked at him with inscrutable eyes—deep as velvet, grave and meditative. She was slight and girlish, with dull blue-black hair, and a face that might have been faithfully cut on a cameo. It was the colour of a sun-burnt peach, and usually wore that air of gentle pride which the Moors seem to have left behind them in those lands through which they passed, to the people upon whom they have impressed

an indelible mark. But when she smiled, which was not often, her lips tilted suddenly at the corners in a way to make an old man young and a young man mad.

Tomaso of the Mill, who sat on the low wall across the road in the shadow of a great fig-tree, was watching with steady eyes. Tomaso was always watching Rosa. He had watched for years. She had grown up under that steady eye. And now, staring into the deep shadow of the cottage interior, he thought that he saw Rosa smile upon Felipe. And Felipe, of course, concluded that she was smiling at him. They all did that. And only Rosa knew the words she had whispered respecting the gallant Felipe.

Tomaso of the Mill was a poor man if you like, and usually considered a dull one to boot. He only had the mill half-way up the hill to the Val d'Erraha—a mill to which no grist came now that there was steam communication between Palma and Barcelona, and it paid better to ship the produce of the island to the mainland, buying in return the adulterated produce of the Barcelona mills. Tomaso's father had been a prosperous man almost to the day of his death, but times had moved on, leaving Tomaso and his mill behind. And there is no man who watches the times move past him with a prouder silence than a Spaniard. The mill hardly brought in ten pesetas a month now, and that was from friends—poor men like himself who were yet gentlemen, and found some carefully worded

reason why they preferred home-milled flour. Tomaso, moreover, was deadly simple: there is nothing more fatal than simplicity in these days. It never occurred to him to sell his mill, or let it fall in ruins and go elsewhere for work. His world had always been bounded on the south by the Val d'Erraha, on the north by the Valdemosa road, on the west by the sea, and on the east by Rosa. He had never suffered from absolute hunger, and nothing but absolute hunger will make a Spaniard leave his home. So Tomaso of the Mill remained at the mill, and, like his forefathers, only repaired the sluices and conduit when the water-supply was no longer heavy enough to drive the creaking wheel.

Since the death of his mother he had lived alone, cooking his own food, washing his own clothes, and no man in the valley wore a whiter shirt. As to the food, perhaps there was not too much of it, or it may have been badly cooked; for Tomaso had a lean and hungry look, and his tanned cheek had diagonal lines drawn from the cheek-bone to the corner of the clean-shaven mouth. The lips were firm, the chin was long. It was a solemn face that looked out from beneath the shadow of the great fig-tree. And—there was no mistaking it—it was the face of that which the world calls a gentleman.

Felipe turned towards him in his good-natured grand way, and invited him by a jerk of the head to

come and partake of his half-bottle of Majorcan wine. There was a great gulf between these two men, for Tomaso wore no jacket and Felipe was never seen without one. Tomaso therefore accepted the invitation with a grave courtesy. Felipe knew his manners also. He poured a few drops into his own glass, for fear the cork should have left a grain of dust, and then filled his guest's little thick tumbler to the brim. They touched glasses gravely and drank, Felipe making a swinging gesture towards Rosa in the dark doorway before raising the glass to his lips.

"And affairs at the mill?" inquired Felipe, with a movement of the hand demanding pardon if the subject should be painful.

"The wheel is still," replied Tomaso, with that grand air of indifference with which Spain must eventually go to the wall. He slowly unrolled and re-rolled a cheap cigarette, and sat down on the bench opposite to Felipe.

Felipe looked at him with that bright and good-natured smile which was known to be so deadly. He spread out his arms in a gesture of lofty indifference.

"What will you?" he asked, with a laugh. "It will come—your fortune."

And Tomaso smiled gravely. He was quite convinced also, in his simple way, that his fortune would come; for it had been predicted by a gipsy from Granada

at the Trinity Fair on the little crowded market-place at Palma. The prediction had caught the popular fancy. Tomaso's poverty, it must be remembered, was a proverb all over the island. "As poor as Tomaso of the Mill," the people said; it being understood that a church mouse failed to suggest such destitution. Moreover, the gipsy foretold that Tomaso should make his own fortune with his own two hands, which added to the joke, for no one in Majorca is guilty of such manual energy as will lead to more than a sufficiency.

"Now, I say," continued Felipe, turning to the widow with that unconscious way of discussing some one who happens to be present which is only understood in Southern worlds. "Now, I say that when it comes, it will have something to do with horses. See how he sits in the saddle!"

And Felipe sketched perfection with a little gesture of his brown hand, which was generous of Felipe; for Tomaso was (by one of those strange chances which lead the Spaniards to say that God gives nuts to those who have no teeth) a born horseman, and sat in the saddle like a god—one straight line from heel to shoulder.

Tomaso had risen from the bench and walked slowly across the road to his former seat on the low wall. He was a shy and rather modest man, and felt, perhaps, that there was a suggestion of condescension in Felipe's

attitude. If Felipe had come here to pay his addresses to Rosa, he, Tomaso, was not the man to put difficulties in the way. For he was one of those rare men who, in loving, place themselves in the background. He loved Rosa, in a word, better than he loved himself. And in the solitude of his life at the mill he had worked out a grim problem in his own mind. He had weighed himself carefully in the balance, nothing extenuating. He had taken as precise a measure of Felipe Fortis with his present position and his future prospects. And, of course, the only solution was that Rosa would do well to marry Felipe. So Tomaso withdrew to the outer side of the road and the shade of the fig-tree, while Felipe talked gaily with Rosa's mother, and Rosa looked on from the doorway with deep, dark eyes that said nothing at all. For Felipe was wooing the daughter through the mother, as men have often done before him; and the widow smiled on Felipe's suit. The whole business, it appeared, was to be conducted in a sane and gentlemanly way, over a half of the widow's wine, with clinking glasses and a grave politeness. And, of course, Felipe had it all his own way. The question of rivalry did not so much as suggest itself to him, so he could the more easily be kind to the quiet man with the steady eyes who withdrew with such tact when he had finished his wine.

Of course, there was Tomaso's fortune to take into consideration. No one seemed to think of doubting

that the prediction must eventually come true, but it was hardly likely to be verified in time to convert Tomaso into a serious rival to Felipe Fortis. There were assuredly no fortunes to be made out of the half-ruined mill. The trade had left that for ever. There was no money in the whole valley, and Tomaso did not seem disposed to go and seek it elsewhere. He passed his time between the mill and the low wall opposite the Venta of the Break of Day, of which the stones beneath the fig-tree were polished with his constant use of them. He usually came down from the mill, which is a mile above the Venta, as any one may prove who seeks the Valley of Repose to-day, by the new road recently cut on the hillside by a spasmodically active Town Council—the road from Miramar to Palma.

It had been at one time supposed that Tomaso's fortune would come to him through this new road, for the construction of which a portion of the land attached to the mill must be purchased. But it was a very small portion, and the purchase-money a ridiculous little sum, which was immediately swallowed up in repairs to the creaking wheel. The road-makers, however, turned aside the stream below the mill, and conducted it to a chasm in the rock, where it fell a great height to a tunnel beneath the road. And half the valley said they could not sleep for the sound of it, and the other half said they liked it. And Rosa, whose bedroom

window was nearer to it than any other in the valley, said nothing at all.

Sitting beneath the fig-tree, Tomaso looked up suddenly towards the mill. He was so much accustomed to the roar of his own mill-stream that his ears never heeded it, and heard through it softer and more distant sounds. He heard something now—the regular beat of trotting horses on the road far above his home. He looked up towards the heights, though, of course, he could see nothing through the pines, which are thickly planted here and almost as large as the pines of Vizzavona, in the island of Corsica. He listened to the sound with that quiet interest which comes to those who live in constant sunshine, and is in itself nearly akin to indifference.

"What is it?" asked the widow, noting his attitude.

"It is a carriage on the new road—some traveller from Miramar."

Travellers from Miramar were few and far between. None had as yet made use of the new road. This was, therefore, a matter of considerable interest to the four persons idling away the afternoon at the Venta of the Break of Day.

"The horses will as likely as not take fright at the new waterfall made by these mules of road-makers," said Tomaso, rising slowly and throwing away the end of his cigarette.

He took his stand in the middle of the road, looking uphill with a gleam of interest in his eyes. He knew horses so well that his opinion arrested the attention of his hearers. Tomaso had always said that the diversion of his mill-stream would be dangerous to the traffic on the new road. But it was nobody's business to consult Tomaso.

He stood in the middle of the road, contemplatively biting his lower lip—a lean, lithe man, who had lived a clean and simple life—and never dreamt that this might be his fortune trotting down the new Miramar road towards him.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, curtly.

The steady pace was suddenly broken, and at the same moment the hollow roar of the wheels told that the carriage was passing over the little tunnel through which the stream escaped to the valley below. Then came the clatter of frightened horses and the broken cry of one behind them. Felipe leapt to his feet and stood irresolute. The widow gave a little cry of fear, and Rosa came out into the sunlight. There the three stood, rigid, watching Tomaso contemplatively biting his lip in the middle of the sun-lit road.

In a moment the suspense was over—the worst was realized. A carriage swung round the corner a quarter of a mile higher up the road, with two horses stretched at a frantic gallop, and the driver had no reins in his hand; for his reins had broken, and the loose ends

fluttered on either side. He was stooping forward, with his right hand at the screw-brake between his legs, and in his left hand he swung his heavy whip. He was a brave man, at all events, for he kept his nerve and tried to guide the horses with his whip. There was just a bare chance that he might reach the Venta, but below it—not a hundred yards below it—the road turned sharply to the right, and everything failing to take that sharp turn would leap into space and the rocky bed of the river five hundred feet below.

The man gave a shout as he came round the corner, and to his credit it was always remembered that his gesture waved Tomaso aside. But Tomaso stood in the middle of the road, and his steady eyes suddenly blazed with a fierce excitement. His lips were apart. He was breathless, and Rosa found herself with her two hands at her throat, watching him.

The carriage seemed to bear right down upon him, but he must have stepped aside, for it passed on and left the road clear. Tomaso was somewhat in the dust, in the confusion of tossing heads and flying reins. Then his white shirt appeared against the black of the horses' manes.

"Name of God!" cried Felipe; "he is on top!"

And Felipe Fortis forgot his fine clothes and superior manners. He was out on the road in an instant, running as he never ran before, and shouting a

hundred Catalonian oaths which cannot be transcribed here, even in Catalonian.

It was difficult to see what happened during these moments, which were just those instants of time in which one man does well and another badly. But Rosa and her mother saw at length that Tomaso was apparently half standing on the pole between the two horses. He was swinging and jerking from side to side, but all the while he was gathering the scattered reins in his hands. Then suddenly he threw himself back, and the horses' heads went up as if they were being strangled. They jerked and tugged in vain. Tomaso's arms were like steel. Already the pace was slackening—the gallop was broken. And a minute later the carriage was at a standstill in the ditch.

Already the driver was on the ground explaining excitedly to Tomaso how it had happened, and Tomaso was smiling gravely as he wiped some blood from his hand. It was Felipe who, arriving at this moment, thought of opening the carriage-door. There was a pause while Felipe looked into the carriage, and Rosa and her mother ran towards him. Rosa helped Felipe to assist an old man to alight. He was a very fat man, with grey and flaccid cheeks, with shiny black hair and a good deal of gold chain and ring about him. He seemed only half-conscious of the assistance proffered to him, and walked slowly across the road to the shade

of the trees. Here he sat down on the low wall, with his elbows on his knees, his two hands to his head, and looked thoughtfully at the ground between his feet. It was precisely the attitude of one who has had a purler at football. And the others looked on in the waiting silence which usually characterizes such moments.

"The gentleman is not hurt?" suggested Felipe, who was always affable and ready with his tongue.

But the gentleman was not prepared to confirm this optimistic view of the case. He simply sat staring at the ground between his feet. At length he lifted his head and looked Felipe slowly up and down.

"Who stopped the horses?" he asked. "A man in a white shirt."

"It was Tomaso of the Mill," answered the widow, who would have spoken sooner if she had had her breath. "He washes his own," she added, anxious to say a good word for a neighbour.

Tomaso should, of course, have come forward and bowed. But Tomaso's manners were not of a showy description. He was helping the driver to repair the reins, and paused at this moment to remove the perspiration from his forehead with two fingers, which he subsequently wiped on the seam of his trousers.

"Hé!" cried the fat man sitting on the wall.

One could see that he was a business man; for he had the curt manner of the counting-house.

"Hé, Tomaso!" added the widow Navarro, in a shrill voice.

And Tomaso came slowly forward.

"Your name?" said the man of business.

"Tomaso."

"Tomaso what?"

"Tomaso of the Mill." And his face fell a little when the fat man produced a pocket-book and wrote the name down with a shaking hand. The action rather savoured of the police and the law, and Tomaso did not like it.

The stout man leant forward with his chin in the palm of his hand and reflected for some moments. He was singularly reflective, and seemed to be making a mental calculation.

"See here," he said at length, looking at Tomaso with quick business-like eyes. He was beginning to recover his colour now. "See here, I am not going to give you money—between gentlemen, eh! such things are not done. You have saved my life. Good! You are a brave man, and you risked your neck for a perfect stranger! I happen to be a rich man, and my life is of some value. I came from Barcelona to Majorca on business—business with a good profit. If I had gone over there"—he paused, and jerked his thumb towards the blue and hazy space that lay below them—

"the transaction would have fallen through. You have enabled me, by your prompt action, to return to Palma this evening and sign the papers connected with this affair. Good! You are therefore entitled to a commission on the profit that I shall make. I have reckoned it out. It amounts to ten thousand pesetas—a modest fortune, eh?"

Tomaso nodded his head. He had always known that it would come. The widow Navarro threw up her eyes, and in a whisper called the attention of her own special black-letter saint to this business. Rosa was glancing surreptitiously at Felipe, who, to do him justice, was smiling on the old man with much appreciation.

"You see what I am," continued the man of business, tapping his exuberant waistcoat; "I am fat and I am sixty-seven. When I return to Palma, I shall notify to a lawyer that I leave to you, 'Tomaso of the Mill,' ten thousand pesetas, to be paid as soon after my death as possible. At Barcelona I shall put the matter into legal form with my own notary there."

He rose from his seat on the wall and held out his thick white hand, which Tomaso took, and they shook hands gravely.

"As between gentlemen, eh?" said he; "as between gentlemen."

Then he walked slowly to the other side of the road,

where the driver was engaged in drawing his carriage out of the ditch.

"I will enter your malediction of a carriage," he said, "but you must lead the horses to the bottom of the hill."

The carriage went slowly on its way, while the others, after watching it turn the corner, returned to the Venta. In the twinkling of an eye Tomaso's fortune had come. And he had won it with his own hands, precisely as the gipsy from Granada had predicted. The tale, moreover, is true, and any one can verify it who will take the trouble to go to Palma de Mallorca, where half a dozen independent witnesses heard the prediction made at a stall in the crowded and narrow market-place nearly six months before the new Miramar road was completed.

As it was getting dusk, Felipe Fortis mounted his horse and rode on to his home in the valley far down the Valdemosa road. And Tomaso, with his handkerchief bound round his hand, walked thoughtfully up to his solitary home. The great problem which he had thought out so carefully and brought to so grim and certain a conclusion had suddenly been reopened. And Rosa had noticed with the quickness of her sex that Tomaso had carefully avoided looking at her from the moment that his good fortune had been made known. His manner, as he bade mother and daughter a gruff good-night was rather that of a malefactor than one

who had just done a meritorious action, and Rosa watched him go with an odd little wise smile tilting the corners of her lips.

"Goodnight," she said. "You—and your fortune."

And Tomaso turned the words over and over in his mind a hundred times, and could make nothing of them.

Rosa was early astir the next morning, and happened to be at the open door when Tomaso came down the road. He was wearing his best hat—a flat-brimmed black felt—which, no doubt, the girl noticed, for it is by the piecing together of such trifles that women hold their own in this world. There was otherwise no change in Tomaso's habiliments, which consisted, as usual, of dark trousers, a white shirt, and a dark-blue faja or waistcloth.

"Where are you going?" cried Rosa, stepping out into the sunlight with a haste called forth, perhaps, by the suspicion that Tomaso would fain have passed by unnoticed.

He stopped, his bronzed face a deeper red, his steady eyes wavering for once. But he did not come towards the Venta, which stands on the higher side of the road.

"I am going down to Palma—to make sure."

"Of your fortune?" inquired Rosa, looking at the cup she was drying with the air of superior knowledge which so completely puzzled the simple Tomaso.

"Yes," he answered, slowly turning on his heel as if to continue his journey.

"And then——?" asked Rosa.

He looked up inquiringly.

"When you have made sure of your precious fortune?" she explained.

She had raised her hand to her hair, and was standing in a very pretty, indifferent attitude. Tomaso held his lower lip between his teeth as he looked at her.

"I don't know what I shall do with it?" he answered, and, turning, he walked hurriedly down the sun-lit road.

"Come in on your way back and tell us about it," she called out after him, and then stood watching him until he turned the corner where he had picked up his fortune on the road the day before.

It was characteristic of the man that he never turned to look at her, and the girl gave a little nod of the head as he disappeared. She had apparently expected him not to look back, and yet wanted him to do it, and at the same time would rather he did not do it. Felipe Fortis would have turned half a dozen times, with a salutation and a wave of the hat.

But the sun went down behind the tableland of the Val d'Erraha and Tomaso did not return. Then the moon rose, large and yellow, beyond the Valdemosa Heights, and the widow Navarro, her day's work done,

walked slowly up the road to visit her sister, the road-keeper's wife. Rosa sat on the bench beneath the trellis, and thought those long thoughts that belong to youth. She heard Tomaso's step long before he came in sight, for the valley is thinly populated and as still as Sahara. He was walking slowly, and dragged his feet as if fatigued. The moon was now well up, and the girl could distinguish Tomaso's gleaming white shirt as he turned the corner. As he approached he kept on the left-hand side of the road. It was evident that he intended to call at the Venta.

"Hé—Tomaso!" cried Rosa, when he was almost at the steps.

"Hé—Rosa!" he answered.

"I am all alone," said Rosa. "Mother has gone to see Aunt Luisa. Have you your fortune in your pocket?"

He came up the steps and leant against the trellis, looking down at her. She could not see his face, but a woman does not always need to do that.

"What is it—Tomaso?" she asked gravely.

"That poor man," he explained simply—for the Spaniards hold human life but cheaply—"was found dead in his carriage when they reached Palma. The doctors say it was the shock—and he so fat. At all events he is dead."

Rosa crossed herself mechanically, and devoutly thought first of all of the merchant's future state.

"His last action was a good one," she said. "There is that to remember."

"Yes," said Tomaso, in a queer voice. And at the sound Rosa looked up at him sharply; but she could see nothing, for his face was in the shadow.

"And as for you," she said tentatively, "you will get your fortune all the sooner."

"I shall never get it at all," answered Tomaso, with a curt laugh. "I went down to Palma this morning with my head full of plans—in the sunshine. I came back with an empty brain—in the dark."

He stood motionless, looking down at her. They are slow of tongue in Majorca, and Rosa reflected for quite a minute before she spoke—which is saying a good deal for a woman.

"Tell me," she said at length, gently, "why is it that you will not get your fortune?"

"I went to the notary and told him what had happened, what the merchant had said, and who had heard him—and the notary laughed. 'Where is your paper?' he asked; and, of course, I had no paper. I went to another notary, and at last I saw the Alcalde. 'You should have asked for a paper properly signed,' he said. But no gentleman could have asked for that."

"No," replied Rosa, rather doubtfully.

"I found the driver of the carriage," continued Tomaso, "and took him to the Alcalde, but that was no

better. The Alcalde and the notaries laughed at us. Such a story, they said, would make any lawyer laugh."

"But there is Felipe Fortis, who heard it too."

"Yes," answered Tomaso, in a hollow voice, "there is Felipe Fortis. He was in Palma, and I found him at the café. But he said he had not time to come to the Alcalde with me then, and he was sure that if he did it would be useless."

"Ah!" said Rosa.

She got up and walked to the edge of the terrace, looking down into the moonlit valley in silence for some minutes. Then she came slowly back, and stood before him looking up into his face. He was head and shoulders above her.

"So your fortune is gone?" she said. And the moonlight shining on her face betrayed the presence of that fleeting wise smile which Tomaso had noticed more than once with wonder.

"Yes—it is gone. And there is an end of it."

"Of what?" asked Rosa.

"Oh!—of everything," replied Tomaso, with a grim stoicism.

Rosa stood looking at him for a moment. Then she took two deliberate steps forward and leant against him just as he was leaning against the trellis, as if he had been a tree or something solid and reliable of that sort. She laid her cheek, of a deeper colour than a sunburnt

peach, against his white shirt. In a sort of parenthesis of thought she took a sudden, half-maternal interest in the middle button of his shirt, tested it, and found it more firmly fixed than she had supposed. Her dusky hair just brushed his chin.

"Then you are nothing but a stupid," she said.

X

STRANDED

"Aucun chemin de fleurs ne conduit à la gloire."

It was nearly half-past eight when the *Grandhaven* ran into a fog-bank, and the second officer sent a message to the captain's steward, waiting at that great man's dinner-table in the saloon.

The captain's steward was a discreet man. He gave the message in a whisper as he swept the crumbs from the table with a jerk of his napkin. The second officer could not, of course, reduce speed on his own responsibility. The *Grandhaven* had been running through fog-banks ever since she left Plymouth in the grey of a November afternoon.

Every Atlantic traveller knows the *Grandhaven*. She was so well known that every berth was engaged despite the lateness of the season. It was considered a privilege to sail with Captain Dixon, the most popular man on the wide seas. A few millionaires considered themselves honoured by his friendship. One or two of

them called him Tom on shore. He was an Englishman, though the *Grandhaven* was technically an American ship. His enemies said that he owed his success in life to his manners, which certainly were excellent. Not too familiar with any one at sea, but unerringly discriminating between man and man, between a real position and an imaginary one. For, in the greatest Republic the world has yet seen, men are keenly alive to social distinctions.

On the other hand, his friends pointed to his record. Captain Dixon had never made a mistake in seamanship.

He was a handsome man, with a trim brown beard cut to a point in the naval style, gay blue eyes, and a bluff way of carrying his head. The lady passengers invariably fell into the habit of describing him as a splendid man, and the word seemed to fit him like a glove. Nature had certainly designed him to be shown somewhere in the front of life, to be placed upon a daïs and looked up to and admired by the multitude. She had written success upon his sunburnt face.

He had thousands of friends. Every seat at his table was booked two voyages ahead, and he knew the value of popularity. He was never carried off his feet, but enjoyed it simply and heartily. He had fallen in love one summer voyage with a tall and soft-mannered Canadian girl, a Hebe with the face of a Madonna, with

thoughtful, waiting blue eyes. She was only nineteen, and, of course, Captain Dixon carried everything before him. The girl was astonished at her good fortune; for this wooer was a king on his own great decks. No princess could be good enough for him, had princesses been in the habit of crossing the Atlantic. Captain Dixon had now been married some years.

His marriage had made a perceptible change in the *personnel* of his intimates. A bachelor captain appeals to a different world. He was still a great favourite with men.

Although the *Grandhaven* had only been one night at sea, the captain's table had no vacant seats. These were all old travellers, and there had been libations poured to the gods, now made manifest by empty bottles and not a little empty laughter. Dixon, however, was steady enough. He had reluctantly accepted one glass of champagne from the bottle of a Senator powerful in shipping circles. He and his officers made a point of drinking water at table. The modern sailor is one of the startling products of these odd times. He dresses for dinner, and when off duty may be found sitting on the saloon stairs discussing with a lady passenger the respective merits of Wagner and Chopin as set forth by the ship's band, when he ought to be asleep in bed in preparation for the middle watch.

The captain received the message with a curt nod. But he did not rise from the table. He knew that a hundred eyes were upon him, watching his every glance. If he jumped up and hurried from the table, the night's rest of half a hundred ladies would inevitably suffer.

He took his watch from his pocket and rose, laughing at some sally made by a neighbour. As he passed down the length of the saloon, he paused to greet one and exchange a laughing word with another. He was a very gracious monarch.

On deck it was wet and cold. A keen wind from the north-west seemed to promise a heavy sea and a dirty night when the Lizard should be passed and the protection of the high Cornish moorlands left behind. The captain's cabin was at the head of the saloon stairs. Captain Dixon lost no time in changing his smart mess-jacket for a thicker coat. Oilskins and a sou'wester transformed him again to the seaman that he was, and he climbed the narrow iron ladder into the howling darkness of the upper bridge with a brisk readiness to meet any situation.

The fog-bank was a thick one. It was like a sheet of wet cotton-wool laid upon the troubled breast of the sea. The lights at the forward end of the huge steamer were barely visible. There was no glare aloft where the masthead light stared unwinking into the mist.

Dixon exchanged a few words with the second officer, who stood, rather restless, by the engine-room telegraph. They spoke in monosyllables. The dial showed "Full speed ahead." Captain Dixon stood chewing the end of his golden moustache, which he had drawn in between his teeth. He looked forward and aft and up aloft in three quick movements of the head. Then he laid his two hands on the engine-room telegraph and reduced the pace to half-speed. There were a hundred people on board who would take note of it with a throb of uneasiness at their hearts, but that could not be helped.

The second officer stepped sideways into the chart-room, reluctant to turn his eyes elsewhere than dead ahead into the wind and mist, to make a note in two books that lay open on the table under the shaded electric lamp. It was twenty minutes to nine.

The *Grandhaven* was a quick ship, but she was also a safe one. The captain had laid a course close under the Lizard lights. He intended to alter it, but not yet. The mist might lift. There was plenty of time, for by dead reckoning they could scarcely hope to sight the twin lights before eleven o'clock. The captain turned and said a single word to his second officer, and a moment later the great fog-horn above them in the darkness coughed out its deafening note of warning. A dead silence followed. Captain Dixon

nodded his head with a curt grunt of satisfaction. There was nothing near them. They could carry on, playing their game of blindman's-buff with Fate, open-eared, steady, watchful.

There was no music to-night, though the band had played the cheeriest items of its *repertoire* outside the saloon door during dinner. Many of the passengers were in their cabins already, for the *Grandhaven* was rolling gently on the shoulder of the Atlantic swell. The sea was heavy, but not so heavy as they would certainly encounter west of the Land's End. Presently the *Grandhaven* crept out into a clear space, leaving the fog-bank in rolling clouds like cannon-smoke behind her.

"Ah!" said Captain Dixon, with a sigh of relief; he had never been really anxious.

The face of the second officer, ruddy and glistening with wet, lighted up suddenly, and sundry lines around his eyes were wiped away as if by the passage of a sponge as he stooped over the binnacle. Almost at once his face clouded again.

"There is another light ahead," he muttered. "Hang them."

The captain gave a short laugh to reassure his subordinate, whom he knew to be an anxious, careful man, on his promotion. Captain Dixon was always self-confident. That glass of champagne from the Senator's hospitable bottle made him feel doubly capable

to-night to take his ship out into the open Atlantic, and then to bed with that easy heart which a skipper only knows on the high seas.

Suddenly he turned to look sharply at his companion, whose eyes were fixed on the fog-bank, which was now looming high above the bows. There were stars above them, but no moon would be up for another three hours. Dixon seemed to be about to say something, but changed his mind. He raised his hands to the ear-flaps of his sou'wester, and, loosening the string under his chin, pushed the flannel lappets up within the cap. The second officer wore the ordinary seafaring cap known as a cheese-cutter. He was much too anxious a man to cover his ears even in clear weather, and said, with his nervous laugh, that the colour did not come out of his hair, if any one suggested that the warmer headgear would protect him from rain and spray.

Dixon stood nearer to his companion, and they stood side by side, looking into the fog-bank, which was now upon them.

"Any dogs on board?" he asked casually.

"No—why do you ask?"

"Thought I heard a little bell; such a thing as a lady's lap-dog wears round his neck on a ribbon."

The second officer turned and glanced sharply up at the captain, who, however, made no further comment, and seemed to be thinking of something else.

"Couldn't have been a bell-buoy, I suppose?" he suggested, with a tentative laugh as he pushed his cap upwards away from his ears.

"No bell-buoys out here," replied the captain, rather sharply, with his usual self-confidence.

They stood side by side in silence for five minutes or more. The mist was a little thinner now, and Captain Dixon looked upwards to the sky, hoping to see the stars. He was looking up when the steamer struck, and the shock threw him against the after rail of the bridge. The second officer was thrown to the ground and struggled there for an instant before getting to his feet again.

"God Almighty!" he said, and that was all.

Captain Dixon was already at the engine-room telegraph wrenching the pointer round to full speed ahead. The quartermaster on watch was at his side in a moment, and several men in shining oilskins swarmed up the ladder to the bridge for their orders.

The *Grandhaven* was quite still now, but trembling like a horse that had stumbled badly and recovered itself with dripping knees. Already the seas were beating the bluff sides of the great vessel, throwing pyramids of spray high above the funnels.

Captain Dixon grabbed the nearest man by the arm.

"The boats," he shouted in his ear. "Tell Mr. Stoke to take charge. Tell him it's the Manacles."

There seemed to be no danger, for the ship was quite steady, with level decks. Turning to another quartermaster, Dixon gave further orders clearly and concisely.

"Keep her at that," he said to the second officer, indicating the dial of the engine-room.

"Stay where you are!" he shouted to the two steersmen who were preparing to quit the wheel-house.

If Captain Dixon had never made a mistake in seamanship he must have thought out the possibilities of this mistake in all their bearings. For the situation was quite clear and compact in his mind. The orders he gave came in their proper sequence and were given to the right men.

From the decks beneath arose a confused murmur like the stirring of bees in an overturned hive. Then a sharp order in one voice, clear and strong, followed by a dead silence.

"Good!" said the captain. "Stoke has got 'em in hand."

He broke off and looked sharply fore and aft and up above him at the towering funnel.

"She is heeling," he said. "Martin, she's heeling."

The ship was slowly turning on her side, like some huge and stricken dumb animal laying itself down to die.

"Yes," said the captain with a bitter laugh, to the

two steersmen who had come a second time to the threshold of the wheel-house, "yes, you can go."

He turned to the engine-room telegraph and rang the "Stand by." But there was no answer. The engineers had come on deck.

"She's got to go," said Martin, the second officer, deliberately.

"You had better follow them," replied the captain, with a jerk of his head towards the ladder down which the two steersmen had disappeared.

"Go, be d——d," said Martin. "My place is here." There was no nervousness about the man now.

The murmur on the decks had suddenly risen to shrieks and angry shouts. Some were getting ready to die in a most unseemly manner. They were fighting for the boats. The clear, strong voice had ceased giving orders. It afterwards transpired that the chief officer, Stoke, was engaged at this time on the sloping decks in tying lifebelts round the women and throwing them overboard, despite their shrieks and struggles. The coastguards found these women strewn along the beach like wreckage below St. Keverne—some that night, some at dawn—and only two were dead.

The captain snapped his finger and thumb, a gesture of annoyance which was habitual to him. Martin knew the meaning of the sound, which he heard through the shouting and the roar of the wind and the hissing of a

cloud of steam. He placed his hand on the deck of the bridge as if to feel it. He had only to stretch out his arm to touch the timbers, for the vessel was lying over farther now. There was no vibration beneath his hand; the engines had ceased to work.

"Yes," said Dixon, who was holding to the rail in front of him with both hands. "Yes, she has got to go."

And as he spoke the *Grandhaven* slid slowly backwards and sideways into the deep water. The shrieks were suddenly increased, and then died away in a confused gurgle. Martin slid down on to the captain, and together they shot into the sea. They sank through a stratum of struggling limbs.

The village of St. Keverne lies nearly two miles from the sea, high above it on the bare tableland that juts out ten miles to the Lizard lights. It is a rural village far from railway or harbour. Its men are agriculturists, following the plough and knowing but little of the sea, which is so far below them that they rarely descend to the beach, and they do no business in the great waters. But their churchyard is full of drowned folk. There are one hundred and four in one grave, one hundred and twenty in another, one hundred and six in a third. An old St. Keverne man will slowly name thirty ships and steamers wrecked in sight of the church steeple in the range of his memory

A quick-eared coastguard heard the sound of the escape of steam, which was almost instantly silenced. Then he heard nothing more. He went back to the station and made his report. He was so sure of his own ears that he took a lantern and went down to the beach. There he found nothing. He stumbled on towards Cadgwith along the unbroken beach. At times he covered his lantern and peered out to sea, but he saw nothing. At last something white caught his eye. It was half afloat amid the breakers. He went knee-deep and dragged a woman to the shore; she was quite dead. He held his lantern above his head and stared out to sea. The face of the water was flecked with dark shadows and white patches. He was alone, two miles from help up a steep combe and through muddy lanes, and as he turned to trudge towards the cliffs his heart suddenly leapt to his throat. There was some one approaching him across the shingle.

A strong deep voice called to him, with command and a certain resolution in its tones.

"You, a coastguard?" it asked.

"Yes."

The man came up to him and gave him orders to go to the nearest village for help, for lanterns and carts.

"What ship?" asked the coastguard.

"*Grandhaven*, London, New Orleans," was the

answer. "Hurry, and bring as many men as you can. Got a boat about here?"

"There is one on the beach half a mile along to the south'ard. But you cannot launch her through this."

"Oh yes, we can."

The coastguard glanced at the man with a sudden interest.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Stoke—first mate," was the reply.

The rest of the story of the wreck has been told by abler pens in the daily newspapers. How forty-seven people were saved; how the lifeboat from Cadgwith picked up some, floating insensible on the ebbing tide with lifebuoys tied securely round them; how some men proved themselves great, and some women greater; how a few proved themselves very contemptible indeed; how the quiet chief officer, Stoke, obeyed his captain's orders to take charge of the passengers;—are not these things told by the newspapers? Some of them, especially the halfpenny ones, went further, and explained to a waiting world how it had all come about, and how easily it might have been avoided. They, moreover, dealt out blame and praise with a liberal hand, and condemned the owners or exonerated the captain with the sublime wisdom which illumines Fleet Street. One and all agreed that because the captain was drowned he was not to

blame, a very common and washy sentiment which appealed powerfully to the majority of their readers. Some of the newspapers, while agreeing that the first officer, having saved many lives by his great exertions during the night, and perfect organization for relief and help the next day, had made for himself an immortal name, hinted darkly that the captain's was the better part, and that they preferred to hear in such cases that all the officers had perished.

Stoke despatched the surviving passengers by train from Helston back to London. They were not enthusiastic about him, neither did they subscribe to present him with a service of plate. They thought him stern and unsympathetic. But before they had realized quite what had happened they were back at their homes or with their friends. Many of the dead were recovered, and went to swell the heavy crop of God's seed sown in St. Keverne churchyard. It was Stoke who organized these quiet burials, and took a careful note of each name. It was he to whom the friends of the dead made their complaint or took their tearful reminiscences, to both of which alike he gave an attentive hearing emphasized by the steady gaze of a pair of grey-blue eyes which many remembered afterwards without knowing why.

"It is all right," said the director of the great steamship company in London. "Stoke is there."

And they sent him money, and left him in charge at St. Keverne. The newspaper correspondents hurried thither, and several of them described the wrong man as Stoke, while others, having identified him, weighed him, and found him wanting in a proper sense of their importance. There was no "copy" in him, they said. He had no conception of the majesty of the Press.

At length the survivors were all sent home and the dead thrown up by the sea were buried. Martin, the second officer, was among these. They found the captain's pilot-jacket on the beach. He must have made a fight for his life, and thrown aside his jacket for greater ease in swimming. Twenty-nine of the crew, eleven passengers, and a stewardess were never found. The sea would never give them up now until that day when she shall relinquish her hostages—mostly Spaniards and English—to come from the deep at the trumpet call.

Stoke finished his business in St. Keverne and took the train to London. Never an expansive man, he was shut up now as the strong are shut up by a sorrow. The loss of the *Grandhaven* left a scar on his heart which time could not heal. She had come to his care from the builder's yard. She had never known another husband.

He was free now—free to turn to the hardest portion of his task. He had always sailed with Dixon,

his life-long friend. They had been boys together, had forced their way up the ladder together, had understood each other all through. His friend's wife, by virtue of her office perhaps, had come nearer to this man's grim and lonely heart than any other woman. He had never defined this feeling; he had not even gone back to its source as a woman would have done, or he might have discovered that the gentle air of question or of waiting in her eyes which was not always there, but only when he looked for it, had been there long ago on a summer voyage before she was Captain Dixon's wife at all.

All through his long swim to shore, all through the horrors of that November night and the long-drawn pain of the succeeding days, he had done his duty with a steady impassiveness which was in keeping with the square jaw, the resolute eyes, the firm and merciful lips of the man; but he had only thought of Mary Dixon. His one thought was that this must break her heart.

It was this thought that made him hard and impassive. In the great office in London he was received gravely. With a dull surprise he noted a quiver in the lips of the managing director when he shook hands. The great business man looked older and smaller and thinner in this short time, for it is a terrible thing to have to deal in human lives, even if you are paid heavily for so doing.

"There will be an official inquiry—you will have to face it, Stoke."

"Yes," he answered, almost indifferently.

"And there is Dixon's wife. You will have to go and see her. I have been. She stays at home and takes her punishment quietly, unlike some of them."

And two hours later he was waiting for Mary Dixon in the little drawing-room of the house in a Kentish village which he had helped Dixon to furnish for her. She did not keep him long, and when she came into the room he drew a sharp breath; but he had nothing to say to her. She was tall and strongly made, with fair hair and delicate colouring. She had no children, though she had been married six years, and Nature seemed to have designed her to be the mother of strong, quiet men.

Stoke looked into her eyes, and immediately the expectant look came into them. There was something else behind it, a sort of veiled light.

"It was kind of you to come so soon," she said, taking a chair by the fireside. There was only one lamp in the room, and its light scarcely reached her face.

But for all the good he did in coming it would seem that he might as well have stayed away, for he had no comfort to offer her. He drew forward a chair and sat down with that square slowness of movement which is natural to the limbs of men who deal

exclusively with Nature and action, and he looked into the fire without saying a word. Again it was she who spoke, and her words surprised the man, who had only dealt with women at sea, where women are not seen at their best.

"I do not want you to grieve for me," she said quietly. "You have enough trouble of your own without thinking of me. You have lost your friend and your ship."

He made a little movement of the lips, and glanced at her slowly, holding his lip between his teeth as he was wont to hold it during the moments of suspense before letting go the anchors in a crowded roadstead as he stood at his post on the forecastle-head awaiting the captain's signal. She was the first to divine what the ship had been to him. Her eyes were waiting for his. They were alight with a gentle glow, which he took to be pity. She spoke calmly, and her voice was always low and quiet. But he was quite sure that her heart was broken, and the thought must have been conveyed to her by the silent messenger that passes to and fro between kindred minds. For she immediately took up his thought.

"It is not," she said rather hurriedly, "as if it would break my heart. Long ago I used to think it would. I was very proud of him and of his popularity. But——"

And she said no more. But sat with dreaming eyes

looking into the fire. After a long pause she spoke again.

"So you must not grieve for me," she said, returning persistently to her point.

She was quite simple and honest. Hers was that rare wisdom which is given only to the pure in heart; for they see through into the soul of man and sift out the honest from among the false.

It seemed that she had gained her object, for Stoke was visibly relieved. He told her many things which he had withheld from other inquirers. He cleared Dixon's good name from anything but that liability to error which is only human, and spoke of the captain's nerve and steadiness in the hour of danger. Insensibly they lapsed into a low-voiced discussion of Dixon as of the character of a lost friend equally dear to them both.

Then he rose to take his leave before it was really necessary to go in order to catch his train, impatient to meet her eyes—which were waiting for his—for a moment as they said good-bye, as the man who is the slave of a habit waits impatiently for the time when he can give way to it.

He went home to the rooms he always occupied near his club in London. There he found a number of letters which had been sent on from the steamship company's offices. The first he opened bore the postmark of St. Just in Cornwall. It was from the

coastguard captain of that remote western station, and it had been originally posted to St. Keverne.

"Dear Sir," he wrote. "One of your crew or passengers has turned up here on foot. He must have been wandering about for nearly a week and is destitute. At times his mind is unhinged. He began to write a letter, but could not finish it, and gives no name. Please come over and identify him. Meanwhile, I will take good care of him."

Stoke opened the folded paper, which had dropped from the envelope.

"Dear Jack," it began. One or two sentences followed, but there was no sequence or sense in them. The writing was that of Captain Dixon without its characteristic firmness or cohesion.

Stoke glanced at his watch and took up his bag—a new bag hurriedly bought in Falmouth—stuffed full of a few necessities pressed upon him by kind persons at St. Keverne when he stood among them in the clothes in which he had swum ashore, which had dried upon him during a long November night. There was just time to catch the night mail to Penzance. Heaven was kind to him and gave him no time to think.

The coach leaves Penzance at nine in the morning for a two hours' climb over bare moorland to St. Just—a little grey, remote town on the western sea. The loneliness of the hills is emphasized here and there by

the ruin of an abandoned mine. St. Just itself, the very acme of remoteness, is yearly diminishing in importance and population, sending forth her burrowing sons to those places in the world where silver and copper and gold lie hid.

The coastguard captain was awaiting Stoke's arrival in the little deserted square where the Penzance omnibus deposits its passengers. The two men shook hands with that subtle and silent fellowship which draws together seamen of all classes and all nations. They walked away together in the calm speechlessness of Englishmen thrown together on matters of their daily business.

"He doesn't pick up at all," said the coastguard captain, at length. "Just sits mum all day. My wife looks after him, but she can't stir him up. If anybody could, she could." And the man walked on, looking straight in front of him with a patient eye. He spoke with unconscious feeling. "He is a gentleman, despite the clothes he came ashore in. Getting across to the Southern States under a cloud, as likely as not," he said, presently. "Some bank manager, perhaps. He must have changed clothes with some forecastle hand. They were seaman's clothes, and he had been sleeping or hiding in a ditch."

He led the way to his house, standing apart in the well-kept garden of the station. He opened the door of the simply furnished drawing-room.

"Here is a friend come to see you," he said; and, standing aside, he invited Stoke by a silent gesture of the head to pass in.

A man was sitting in front of the fire with his back towards the door. He did not move or turn his head. Stoke closed the door behind him as he entered the room, and went slowly towards the fireplace. Dixon turned and looked at him with shrinking eyes, like the eyes of a dog that has been beaten.

"Let us get out on to the cliffs," he said in a whisper. "We cannot talk here."

He was clean-shaven, and his hair was grizzled at the temples. His face looked oddly weak; for he had an irresolute chin, hitherto hidden by his smart beard. Few would have recognized him.

By way of reply Stoke went back towards the door.

"Come on, then," he said rather curtly.

They did not speak until they had passed out beyond the town towards the bare tableland that leads to the sea.

"Couldn't face it, Jack, that's the truth," said the captain, at last. "And if you or any others try to make me, I'll shoot myself. How many was it? Tell me quickly, man."

"Over a hundred and ninety," replied Stoke.

They walked out on to the bare tableland and sat down on a crumbling wall.

"And what do the papers say? I have not dared to ask for one."

Stoke shrugged his square shoulders.

"What does it matter what they say?" answered the man who had never seen his own name in the newspapers. Perhaps he failed to understand Dixon's point of view.

"Have you seen Mary?" asked the captain.

"Yes."

Then they sat in silence for some minutes. There was a heavy sea running, and the rocks round the Land's End were black in a bed of pure white. The Longship's lighthouse stood up, a grey shadow in a grey scene.

"Come," said Stoke. "Be a man and face it."

There was no answer, and the speaker sat staring across the lashed waters to the west, his square chin thrust forward, his resolute lips pressed, his eyes impassive. There was obviously only one course through life for this seaman—the straight one.

"If it is only for Mary's sake," he added at length.

"Keeping the Gull Lightship east-south-east, and having the South Foreland west by north, you should find six fathoms of water at a neap tide," muttered Captain Dixon, in a low monotone. His eyes were fixed and far away. He was unconscious

of his companion's presence, and spoke like one talking in his dreams.

Stoke sat motionless by him while he took his steamer in imagination through the Downs and round the North Foreland. But what he said was mostly nonsense, and he mixed up the bearings of the inner and outer channels into a hopeless jumble. Then he sat huddled up on the wall and lapsed again into a silent dream, with eyes fixed on the western sea. Stoke took him by the arm and led him back to the town, this harmless, soft-speaking creature who had once been a brilliant man, and had made but one mistake at sea.

Stoke wrote a long letter to Mary Dixon that afternoon. He took lodgings in a cottage outside St. Just, on the tableland that overlooks the sea. He told the captain of the coastguards that he had been able to identify this man, and had written to his people in London.

Dixon recognized her when she came, but he soon lapsed again into his dreamy state of incoherence, and that which made him lose his grip on his reason was again the terror of having to face the world as the captain of the lost *Grandhaven*. To humour him they left St. Just and went to London. They changed their name to that which Mary had borne before her marriage, a French Canadian name, Baillère. A great London specialist held out a dim hope of ultimate recovery.

"It was brought on by some great shock," he suggested.

"Yes," said Stoke. "By a great shock."

"A bereavement?"

"Yes," answered Stoke, slowly.

It is years since the loss of the *Grandhaven*, and her story was long ago superseded and forgotten. And the London specialist was wrong.

The Baillères live now in the cottage westward of St. Just towards the sea, where Stoke took lodgings. It was the captain's wish to return to this remote spot. Whenever Captain Stoke is in England he spends his brief leave of absence in journeying to the forgotten mining town. Baillère passes his days in his garden or sitting on the low wall, looking with vacant eyes across the sea whereon his name was once a household word. His secret is still safe. The world still exonerates him because he was drowned.

"He sits and dreams all day," is the report that Mary always gives to Stoke when she meets him in the town square, where the Penzance omnibus, the only link with the outer world, deposits its rare passengers.

"And you?" Stoke once asked her in a moment of unusual expansion, his deep voice half muffled with suppressed suspense.

She glanced at him with that waiting look which he knows to be there, but never meets. For he is a hard man—hard to her, harder to himself.

"I," she said, in a low voice, "I sit beside him."

And who shall gauge a woman's dream ?

XI

PUTTING THINGS RIGHT

"WANT Berlyng," he seemed to be saying, though it was difficult to catch the words, for we were almost within range, and the fight was a sharp one. It was the old story of India frontier warfare; too small a force, and a foe foolishly underrated.

The man they had just brought in—laying him hurriedly on a bed of pine-needles, in the shade of the conifers where I had halted my little train—poor Charles Noon of the Sikhs, was done for. His right hand was off at the wrist, and the shoulder was almost severed.

I bent my ear to his lips, and heard the words which sounded like "Want Berlyng."

We had a man called Berlyng in the force—a gunner—who was round at the other side of the fort that was to be taken before night, two miles away at least.

"Do you want Berlyng?" I asked slowly and distinctly.

Noon nodded, and his lips moved. I bent my head again till my ear almost touched his lips.

"How long have I?" he was asking.

"Not long, I'm afraid, old chap."

His lips closed with a queer distressed look. He was sorry to die.

"How long?" he asked again.

"About an hour."

But I knew it was less. I attended to others, thinking all the while of poor Noon. His home life was little known, but there was some story about an engagement at Poonah the previous warm weather. Noon was rich, and he cared for the girl; but she did not return the feeling. In fact, there was some one else. It appears that the girl's people were ambitious and poor, and that Noon had promised large settlements. At all events, the engagement was a known affair, and gossips whispered that Noon knew about the some one else, and would not give her up. He was, I know, thought badly of by some, especially by the elders, who had found out the value of money as regards happiness, or rather the complete absence of its value.

However, the end of it all lay on the sheet beneath the pines, and watched me with such persistence that I was at last forced to go to him.

"Have you sent for Berlyng?" he asked, with a breathlessness which I know too well.

Now I had not sent for Berlyng, and it requires more nerve than I possess to tell unnecessary lies to a dying man. The necessary ones are quite different, and I shall not think of them when I go to my account.

"Berlyng could not come if I sent for him," I replied soothingly. "He is two miles away from here trenching the North Wall, and I have nobody to send. The messenger would have to run the gauntlet of the enemy's earthworks."

"I'll give the man a hundred pounds who does it," replied Noon, in his breathless whisper. "Berlyng will come sharp enough if you say it's from me. He hates me too much." He broke off with a laugh which made me feel sick. "Could he get here in time," he asked after a pause, "if you sent for him?"

"Yes," I replied, with my hand inside his soaked tunic.

I found a wounded water-carrier—a fellow with a stray bullet in his hand—who volunteered to find Berlyng, and then I returned to Noon and told him what I had done. I knew that Berlyng could not come.

He nodded, and I think he said, "God bless you."

"I want to put something right," he said, after an effort; "I've been a blackguard."

I waited a little in case Noon wished to repose some confidence in me. Things are so seldom put

right that it is wise to facilitate such intentions. But it appeared obvious that what Noon had to say could only be said to Berlyng. They had, it subsequently transpired, not been on speaking terms for some months.

I was turning away when Noon suddenly cried out in his natural voice, "There *is* Berlyng."

I turned and saw one of my men, Swearney, carrying in a gunner. It might be Berlyng, for the uniform was that of a captain, but I could not see his face. Noon, however, seemed to recognize him.

I showed Swearney where to lay his man, close to me alongside Noon, who at that moment required all my attention, for he had fainted.

In a moment Noon recovered, despite the heat, which was tremendous. He lay quite still looking up at the patches of blue sky between the dark motionless tops of the pine trees. His face was livid under the sunburn, and as I wiped the perspiration from his forehead he closed his eyes with the abandon of a child. Some men, I have found, die like children going to sleep.

He slowly recovered, and I gave him a few drops of brandy. I thought he was dying, and decided to let Berlyng wait. I did not even glance at him as he lay, covered with dust and blackened by the smoke of his beloved nine-pounders, a little to the left of Noon, and behind me as I knelt at the latter's side.

After a while his eyes grew brighter, and he began to look about him. He turned his head, painfully, for the muscles of his neck were injured, and caught sight of the gunner's uniform.

"Is that Berlyng?" he asked excitedly.

"Yes."

He dragged himself up and tried to get nearer to Berlyng. And I helped him. They were close alongside each other. Berlyng was lying on his back, staring up at the blue patches between the pine trees.

Noon turned on his left elbow and began whispering into the smoke-grimed ear.

"Berlyng," I heard him say, "I was a blackguard. I am sorry, old man. I played it very low down. It was a dirty trick. It was my money—and her people were anxious for her to marry a rich man. I worked it through her people. I wanted her so badly that I forgot I—was supposed—to be a—gentleman. I found out—that it was you—she cared for. But I couldn't make up my mind to give her up. I kept her—to her word. And now it's all up with me—but you'll pull through and it will all—come right. Give her my—love—old chap. You can now—because I'm—done. I'm glad they brought you in—because I've been able—to tell you—that it is you she cares for. You—Berlyng, old chap, who used to be a chum of mine. She cares for you—God! you're in luck! I

don't know whether she's told you—but she told me—and I was—a d——d blackguard."

His jaw suddenly dropped, and he rolled forward with his face against Berlyng's shoulder.

Berlyng was dead when they brought him in. He had heard nothing. Or perhaps he had heard and understood—everything.

XII

FOR JUANITA'S SAKE

CARTONER, of the Foreign Office, who is still biding his time, is not tired of Spain yet—and it must be remembered that Cartoner knows the Peninsula. He began to know it twenty years ago, and his knowledge is worthy of the name, inasmuch as it moves with the times. Some day there will be a war in Spain, and we shall fight either for or against the Don, which exercise Englishmen have already enjoyed more than once. Cartoner hopes that it may come in his time, when, as he himself puts it, he will be "there or thereabouts." Had not a clever man his opportunity when the Russian war broke out, and he alone of educated Britons knew the Crimea? That clever man had a queer temper, as we all know, and so lost his opportunity; but, if he gets it, Cartoner will take his chance coolly and steadily enough. In the mean time he is, if one may again borrow his own terse expression, "by no means nowhere," for in the Foreign Office those who know Spain are a small

handful; and those who, like Cartoner, can cross the Pyrenees and submerge themselves unheeded in the quiet, sleepy life of Andalusia, are to be numbered on two fingers, and no more. When a question of Spain or of, say, Cuba arises, a bell is rung in the high places of the Foreign Office, and a messenger in livery is despatched for Cartoner, who, as likely as not, will be discovered reading *El Imparcial* in his room. It is always pleasant to be able to ring a bell and summon a man who knows the difference between Andalusia and Catalonia—and can without a moment's hesitation say where Cuba is and to what Power it belongs, such matters not always being quite clear to the comprehension of a Cabinet Minister who has been brought up to the exclusive knowledge of the Law, or the manufacture of some article of daily domestic consumption.

While possessing his knowledge in patience, Cartoner naturally takes a mean advantage of those in high places who have it not, nor yet the shadow of it. About once in six months he says that he thinks he ought to go to Spain, and raps out a few technicalities relating to the politics of the Peninsula. A couple of days later he sets off for the land of sun and sleep with what he calls his Spanish kit in a portmanteau. This he purchased in the "Sierpe" for forty pesetas at a ready-made tailor's, where it was labelled "Fantasia." It is merely a tweed suit, but,

wearing it, Cartoner is safe from the reproach that doggeth the step of the British tourist abroad.

It was during one of these expeditions that Cartoner, in his unobtrusive way, found himself in Toledo, where, the guide-books tell us, the traveller will obtain no fit accommodation. It was evening, and the company who patronized the Café of the New Gate were mostly assembled at small tables in the garden of that house of entertainment. The moon was rising over the lower lands across the Tagus, behind the gate which gives its name to this café. It is very rightly called the New Gate. Did not Wemba build it in the sixth century, as he has cheerfully written upon its topmost stone?

Cartoner sat at one of the outside tables, where the hydrangeas, as large as a black currant bush, are ranged in square green boxes against the city wall. He was thoughtfully sipping his coffee when a man crawled between his legs and hid himself like a sick dog between Cartoner's chair and the hydrangea trees. The hiding-place was a good one, provided that the fugitive had the collusion of whosoever sat in Cartoner's chair.

"His Excellency would not betray a poor unfortunate," whispered an eager voice at Cartoner's elbow, while, with a *sang-froid* which had been partly acquired south of the Pyrenees, the Briton sat and gazed across the Tagus.

"That depends upon what the unfortunate has been after."

There was a silence while Truth wrestled with the Foe in the shadows of the bush in the green box.

"His Excellency is not of Toledo."

"Nor yet of Spain," replied Cartoner, knowing that it is good to speak the truth at times.

"They have chased me from Algodor. They on horseback, I running through the forest. You will hear them rattling across the bridge soon. If I can only lie hidden here until they have ridden on into the town, I can double and get away to Barcelona."

Cartoner was leaning forward on the little tin table, his chin in the palm of his hand.

"You must not speak too loud," he said, "especially when the music is still."

For the Café of the New Gate had the additional attraction of what the proprietor called a concert. The same consisting of a guitar and a bright-coloured violin, the latter in the hands of a wandering scoundrel, who must have had good in him somewhere—it peeped out in the lower notes.

"Has his Excellency had coffee?" inquired the man behind Cartoner's chair.

"Yes."

"Does any sugar remain? I have not eaten since morning."

Cartoner dropped the two square pieces of sugar over his shoulder, and there was a sound of grinding.

"His Excellency will not give me up. I can slip a knife into his Excellency's liver where I sit."

"I know that. What have you been doing?"

"I killed Emmanuelo Dembaza, that is all."

"Indeed—but why kill Señor Dembaza?"

"I did it for Juanita's sake."

A queer smile flitted across Cartoner's face. He was a philosopher in his way, and knew that such things must be.

"He was a scoundrel, and had already ruined one poor girl," went on the voice from the tree. The cheap violin was speaking about good and bad mixed together again—and to talk aloud was safe. "But she was no better than she should be—a tobacco-worker. And tobacco for work or pleasure ever ruins a woman, Señor. Look at Seville. But Juanita is different. She irons the fine linen. She is good—as good as his Excellency's mother—and beautiful. Maria! His Excellency should see her eyes. You know what eyes some Spanish women have. A history and something one does not understand."

"Yes," answered Cartoner again. "I know."

"Juanita thought she liked him," went on the voice, bringing its hearer suddenly back to Toledo; "she thought she liked him until she found him out. Then he turned upon her and said things that were not true.

Such things, Señor, ruin a girl, whether they be true or not—especially if the women begin to talk. Is it not so?"

"Yes."

"She told me of it, and we decided that there was nothing to do but kill Emmanuelo Dembaza. She kissed me, Excellency, and every time she did that I would kill a man if she asked me."

"Indeed."

"Yes, Excellency."

"And if you are taken and sent to prison for, say, twenty years?" suggested Cartoner.

"Then Juanita will drown herself. She has sworn it."

"And if I do not give you up? If you escape?"

"She will follow me to Argentina, Excellency; and, Madre de Dios, we shall get married."

At this moment the waiter came up, cigarette in mouth, after the manner of Spain, and suggested a second cup of coffee, to which Cartoner assented—with plenty of sugar.

"Have you money?" asked Cartoner, when they were alone again.

"No, Señor."

"In this world it is no use being a criminal unless you are rich. If you are poor you must be honest. That is the first rule of the game."

"I am as poor as a street-dog," said the voice, unconcernedly.

"And you would not take a loan as from one gentleman to another?"

"No," answered Spanish pride, crouching in the bushes, "I could not do that."

Cartoner reflected for some moments. "In the country from which I come," he said at length, "we have a very laudable reverence for relics and a very delicate taste in such matters. If one man shoots another we like to see the gun, and we pay sixty centimes to look upon it. There are people who make an honest living by such exhibitions. If they cannot get the gun they put another in its place, and it is all the same. Now, your knife—the one the Señorita sharpens with a kiss—in my country it will have its value. Suppose I buy it; suppose we say five hundred pesetas?"

And Cartoner's voice was the voice of innocence.

There was silence for some time, and at last the knife came up handlewise between the leaves of the hydrangea. Spanish pride is always ready to shut its eyes.

"But you must swear that what you tell me is true and that Juanita will join you in Argentina. Honour of a gentleman."

"Honour of a gentleman," repeated the voice; and

the hand of a blacksmith came through the leaves, seeking Cartoner's grasp.

"They are turning the lights out," said Cartoner, when the bargain was concluded. "But I will wait until it is safe to leave you here. Your friends the *guardia civile* do not arrive."

"Pardon, Señor, I think I hear them."

And the fugitive's ears did not err. For presently a tall man, white with dust in his great swinging cloak, stalked suspiciously among the tables, looking into each face. He saluted Cartoner, who was better dressed than the other frequenters of the Café of the New Gate, and passed on. A horrid moment.

"The good God will most likely remember that you have done this deed to-night," said the voice, with a queer break in it.

"He may," answered Cartoner, who was lighting his cigarette before going. "On the other hand, I may get five years in a Spanish prison."

XIII

AT THE FRONT

"Some one who is not girlish now"

It was only yesterday that I saw her. It happened that the string of carriages was stopped at that moment, and I went to the door of her comfortable-looking barouche.

"Do you ever feel that shoulder," I asked, raising my hat, "at the changes of the weather, or when it is damp?"

She turned and looked at me in surprise. Her face had altered little. It was the face of a happy woman, despite a few lines, which were not the marks left by a life of gaiety and dissipation. They were not quite the lines that Time had drawn on the faces of the women in the carriages around her. In some ways she looked younger than most of them, and her eyes had an expression which was lacking in the gas-wearied orbs of her fashionable sisters. It was the shadowy reflection of things seen.

She looked into my face—noting the wear and tear that life had left there. Then suddenly she smiled and held out her hand.

"You!" she said. "You—how strange!"

She blushed suddenly and laughed with a pretty air of embarrassment which was startlingly youthful.

"No," she went on, in answer to my question; "I never feel that shoulder now—thanks to you."

There were a number of questions I wanted to ask her. But I had fallen into a habit, years ago, of restraining that inexpedient desire; and she did not seem to expect interrogation. Besides, I could see many answers in her face.

"You limped just now," she said, leaning towards me with a little grave air of sympathy which was quite familiar to me—like an old friend forgotten until seen again. "You limped as you crossed the road."

"I shall limp until the end of the chapter."

"And you have been at that work ever since?"

"Yes."

She looked past me over the trees of the Park—as if looking back into a bygone period of her life.

"Will you come and dine to-morrow night?" she said suddenly. "Fred will be . . . very pleased to see you. And—I want to show you the children."

The line of carriages moved on slowly towards the Park gate, and left me baring a grizzled old bullet-head in answer to her smile and nod.

As I limped along it all came back to me. A good many years before—in the days when hard work was the salt of life—I was entrusted with my first field hospital. I was sent up to the front by the cleverest surgeon and the poorest organizer that ever served the Queen.

Ah, that *was* a field hospital! My first! We were within earshot of the front—that is to say, we could hear the platoon firing. And when the wounded came in we thought only of patching them up temporarily—sewing, bandaging, and plastering them into travelling order, and sending them down to the head-quarters at the coast. It was a weary journey across the desert, and I am afraid a few were buried on the way.

Early one morning, I remember, they brought in Boulson, and I saw at once that he had come to stay. We could not patch him up and send him off. The jolting of the ambulance waggon had done its work, and Boulson was insensible when they laid him on one of the field-cots. He remained insensible while I got his things off. The wound told its own story. He had been at the hand-to-hand work again, and a bayonet never meets a broad-headed spear without trouble coming of it. Boulson meant to

get on—consequently I had had him before. I had cut his shirt off him before this, and knew that it was marked "F. L. G. M.," which does not stand for Boulson.

Boulson's name was not Boulson; but that was not our business at the time. We who patch up Thomas Atkins when he gets hurt in the interests of his Queen and country are never surprised to find that the initials on his underlinen do not tally with those in the regimental books. When the military millennium arrives, and ambulance services are perfect, we shall report things more fully. Something after this style—"Killed: William Jones. Coronet on his razor-case. Linen marked A. de M. F. G."

While I was busy with a sponge, Boulson opened his eyes and recognized me.

"Soon got *you* back again," I remarked, with ghastly professional cheeriness.

He smiled feebly. "Must get into the despatches somehow," he answered, and promptly fainted again.

I took especial care of Boulson, being mindful of a letter I had received while he was recovering from his last wound. It was a long and rambling letter, dated from a place on the west coast of Ireland. It was signed with a name which surprised me, and the writer, who addressed me as "Sir," and mentioned that he was my humble servant, stated that he was Boulson's father.

At least he said he thought he was Boulson's father—if Boulson was tall and fair, with blue eyes, and a pepper-castor mark on his right arm, where a charge of dust-shot had lodged from a horse-pistol. There had, he informed me, been family misunderstandings about a foolish fancy formed by Boulson for a military career. And Boulson had gone off—God bless him—like the high-spirited Irishman that he was—to enlist as a private soldier. And then came the news of the serious wound, and if there was a God in heaven (which I never doubted), any kindness and care that I could bestow upon Boulson would not be forgotten at the last reckoning. And more to a like effect.

Moreover, Boulson pulled through and was duly sent down to the fine, roomy convalescent hospital on the coast, where they have ice, and newspapers, and female nurses fresh from Netley.

This second wound was, however, a more serious affair. While others came and went, Boulson seemed inclined to stay for ever. At all events he stayed for ten days, and made no progress worth mentioning.

At the end of that time I was sitting at my table writing perversions of God's truth to the old gentleman on the west coast of Ireland when I heard the rumble of ambulance waggons. I thought that it was only a returned empty—there having been an

informal funeral that evening—so hardly disturbed myself.

Presently, however, some one came and stood in front of my table outside the tent. I looked up, and looked into the face of one of the few women I have met who make me believe in love stories.

"Halloa!" I said, somewhat rudely.

"I beg to report myself," she answered quietly.

There was a peculiar unsteadiness in her eyes. It seemed to me that this woman was labouring under great excitement.

"Did the Surgeon-Major send you?" I asked.

"I volunteered."

"Hum! I think I ought to have been asked first. This is no place for women."

"Wherever there is nursing to be done, we can hardly be out of place," she answered, with a determination which puzzled me.

"Theoretically," I answered; and, seeing that she had arrived, I made a shift to find her suitable quarters and get her to work.

"Have you any serious cases?" she asked, while unpacking and setting out for my inspection sundry stores she had brought.

"I have Boulson again," I answered. "The man you had in the spring."

She buried her head in the case, and did not answer for some seconds.

When at length she did speak, her voice was indifferent and careless.

"Badly hurt?" she asked.

"Yes."

She finished unpacking her stores rather hurriedly, and expressed her readiness to go round the cots with me.

"Are you not too tired after your journey?"

"No, I—I should like to begin at once. Please let me."

I took her round, and altogether I was pleased with her.

In a day or two I almost became resigned to her presence, though I hate having women anywhere near the action. It is always better to get the nasty cases cleaned up before the women see them.

Then suddenly came bad news. There was something wrong at the front. Our fellows were falling back upon us. A final stand was to be made at our position until reinforcements came up.

I sent for Nurse Fielding, and told her to get ready to leave for headquarters at once. I was extremely business-like and formal. She was neither. That is the worst of women.

"Please let me stay," she said. "Please."

I shook my head.

"I would rather stay and be killed than go away and be safe."

That aroused my suspicions. Perhaps they ought to have been aroused before; but, then, I am only a man. I saw how the Surgeon-Major had been managed.

"Please," she repeated softly.

She laid her hand on my arm, and did not withdraw it when she found that the sleeve was wet with something that was thicker than water.

"Please," she whispered.

"Oh, all right—stay!"

I was sorry for it the next day, when we had the old familiar music of the bullets overhead.

Later in the morning matters became more serious. The enemy had a gun with which they dropped six-pound shot into us. One of these fell on to the corner of our hospital where Boulson lay. It tore the canvas, and almost closed Boulson's career.

Nurse Fielding was at him like a terrier, and lifted him bodily from his cot. She was one of those largely framed fair women who have strength, both physical and mental.

She was carrying him across the tent when I heard the thud of a bullet. Nurse Fielding stopped for a moment and seemed to hesitate. She laid Boulson tenderly down on the ground, and then fell across him, while the blood ran from her cotton bodice over his face and neck.

And that was what I meant when I asked the lady

in the barouche at the Park gate whether she ever felt that shoulder now. And the man I dine with to-night is not called Boulson, but he has a charge of dust-shot—the result of a boyish experiment—in his right arm.

XIV

THE END OF THE "MOOROO"

"How long can you give us?"

The man who asked this question turned his head and looked up through a maze of bright machinery. But he did not rise from his recumbent position. He was, in fact, lying on his face on a steel-bar grating—in his shirt-sleeves—his hands black with oil and steel filings.

The captain of the *Mooroo* — far up above on the upper platform—leant his elbow on the steel banister and reflected for exactly two seconds. He was in the habit of sleeping and thinking very quickly.

"I reckon that we will be on the rocks in about twenty minutes to half an hour—unless you can get her going."

The chief engineer muttered something which was not audible above the roar of the wind through the rigging and the wash of the green seas that leapt over the bulwarks of the well-deck.

"What?" yelled the captain, leaning over the balustrade.

"D——n it," reiterated the chief, with his head hidden.

They were all down there—the whole engineer's staff of the *Mooroo*—in their shirt-sleeves, lying among the bright steel rods—busy at their craft—working against time for their lives.

It was unfortunate that the engines should have held good right across the Arabian Sea, through the Red Sea, through the trying "fast" and "slow" and "stand by" and "go ahead" of the Canal—right through to the Pointe de Raz light, which was blinking down upon them now.

The ship had been got round with difficulty. Her sails, all black with coal-dust and the smoke of many voyages, had been shaken out. They served to keep the vessel's bluff prow pushing into the gale, but that was all. The *Mooroo* was drifting—drifting.

While the passengers were at dinner the engines had suddenly stopped, and almost before the fact had been realized, the captain, having exchanged glances with his officers, was out of the saloon.

"Something in the engine-room," said the doctor and the fifth officer—left at table. The engineer had probably stopped to replace a worn washer or something similarly simple.

The stewards hurried to and fro with the dishes.

And the passengers went on eating their last dinner on earth in that sublime ignorance which is the prerogative of passengers.

Mrs. Judge Barrowby, who, in view of the captain's vacant chair on her left hand, took, as it were, moral command of the ship, was heard to state in a loud voice that she had every confidence in the officers and the crew.

Young Skeen, of the Indian Intelligence, who sat within hearing of Mrs. Judge Barrowby, for his own evil ends and purposes, thereafter said that he could now proceed with his dinner—that his appetite was beginning to return.

"Of course," he went on to say, "if Mrs. Judge Barrowby says that it is all right——"

But he got no farther than this. For a young lady with demure eyes and twitching lips, who was sitting next to him, whispered that Mrs. Judge Barrowby was looking, and that he must behave himself.

"I have every confidence in Mrs. Judge Barrowby," he, nevertheless, managed to assure a grave-looking man across the table.

The truth was that Mrs. Judge Barrowby had had her eye on these two young people all the voyage. There was no reason that they should not fall in love with each other, and marry and be happy ever afterwards; but Mrs. Judge Barrowby felt that it was incumbent upon them to ask her first, or at all events

to keep her posted as to the progress of matters, so that she might have the satisfaction of knowing more than her neighbours. But the young people simply ignored her.

Lady Crafer, the mother of the girl with the demure eyes, was a foolish woman, who passed most of her days in her cabin; and Mrs. Judge Barrowby felt, and went so far as to say to more than one person, that the least that a nice-minded girl could, under the circumstances, do was to place herself under the protection of some experienced lady—possibly herself. From the fact that Evelyn Crafer had failed to do this, Mrs. Judge Barrowby intimated that each might draw an individual inference.

While these thoughts were in course of lithography upon the expressive countenance of the lady at the captain's end of the saloon table, strange things were taking place on the deck of the good steamship *Mooroo*. The entire crew had, in fact, been summoned on deck. The boats were being pushed out—the davits swung round, the tarpaulin covers removed, and the awnings unbent. Life-belts were being collected in the music-room on deck, and the purser had given orders to the stewards to prolong dinner as much as possible.

"Let 'em have their dinner first," the captain had said significantly.

And all the while the *Mooroo* was drifting.

Immediately over the stern rail a light came and went at regular intervals on the horizon, while to eastward, at a higher elevation, a great, yellow staring eye looked out into the night. This was the light on the westernmost point of Europe—the Pointe de Raz. The smaller beacon, low down on the horizon, was that of the Ile de Sein, whose few inhabitants live by what the sea brings them in—be it fish or wreckage. There is enough of both. A strong current sets north and east, and it becomes almost a "race" in the narrow channel between the Ile de Sein and the rock-bound mainland. The *Mooroo* was in this current.

The captain had said no more than the truth. There are times when nature is too strong for the strongest man and the keenest brain. There was simply nothing to be done but to try and get the repair completed in time—and on deck to send up rockets, and—to prepare for the worst. This the captain had done—even to unlacing his own boots. The latter is always a bad sign. When the captain thinks of his own boots it is time for others to try and remember the few good deeds they may have done.

In ten minutes the passengers knew; for the captain went and told them—before they had their dessert. The result was confusion, and a rush for the saloon stairs. The boats were already lowered and alongside the gangway steps in a terrible sea.

The old ladies did wonderfully well, considering

their age and other things. Mrs. Judge Barrowby was heard to say that she would never travel by anything but P. and O. in future, and that it was all her husband's fault. But she was third on the stairs, and in time to select the roomiest life-belt. Lady Crafer was a great believer in stewards. She clung to one, and, calling upon Evelyn to follow her, made very good practice down the saloon.

There was no doubt whatever about young Skeen of the Indian Intelligence. He simply took charge of Evelyn Crafer. He took possession of her and told her what to do. He even found time to laugh at Mrs. Judge Barrowby's ankles as she leapt over a pile of dirty plates.

"Stay here," he cried to Evelyn. "It is useless going with that rabble. Our only chance is to stay."

She obeyed him. Women sometimes do it still. They stood in the gaily lighted saloon, and witnessed the rush for the deck—a humiliating sight.

When at length the stairs were clear, Skeen turned and looked into her face. Then suddenly he took her in his arms and kissed her. They had been drifting towards this for some weeks past. Circumstances had hurried it on. That was all.

"Dear," he said, "will you stay here while I go on deck and see what chances there are? If you once get up there in the dark and the confusion, I shall lose you."

"Yes," she answered; and as she spoke there was a great crash, which threw her into his arms a second time, and made a clean sweep of the tables. They stood literally ankle-deep in wine-glasses, dessert, and plates. The *Mooroo* had taken the rocks. There was a rolling crash on the deck overhead, and a confused sound of shouting.

"You will stay?" cried Skeen again.

"Yes—dear."

He turned and left her there, alone.

On deck he found a crowd. The passengers were being allowed to go to the boats. Taking into consideration the darkness, the roaring sea, and the hopelessness of it all, the organization was wonderful. The children were going first. A quarter-master stood at the head of the gangway steps and held the people in check. When Skeen arrived, Mrs. Judge Barrowby was giving this man a piece of what she was pleased to call her mind.

"Man," she was saying, "let me pass! You do not know who I am. I am the wife of Judge Barrowby."

"Marm, you may be the wife of the harkangel Gabriel as far as I knows; but I've my orders. Stand aside please. Any more babies in arms?" he cried.

But Mrs. Judge Barrowby knew the value of a good useful life, and persistently blocked up the gangway.

"One woman is as good as another," she said.

"Ay, except the mothers, and they're better," said

the man, pushing her aside to let a lady and her child pass.

"*That* woman!" cried Mrs. Judge Barrowby. "A woman who has been the talk of the whole ship—before *me*—a flirting grass widow!"

"Gawd knows," said the man, holding her back. "It's little enough to fight about."

"I will report you, man."

"Yes, marm, to the good God, and I ain't afraid o' *Him! Now* you may go!"

And, fuming, Mrs. Judge Barrowby went down to her death. Not one boat could reach the shore through such a surf, as captain and crew well knew; but there are certain formalities *vis-à-vis* to human lives which must be observed by ship-captains and doctors and others.

Skeen ran to the other side. Lights were twinkling through the spray; the land was not two hundred yards off, but it was two hundred yards of rock and surf. There was only one chance.

Skeen kicked off his boots and ran back to the saloon. It was all a matter of seconds. For a few moments the brilliant lights dazzled him, and he looked round wildly for Evelyn Crafer. A great fear seized his heart as in a grip of cold iron—but only for a moment. He saw her. She was kneeling by the table, unaware of his presence.

"Oh God," she was praying aloud, "save him—save *him* from this danger!"

He heard the words as he stopped to lift her like a child from her knees—bringing her back from God to man.

And the end of the *Mooroo* was a girl sitting before a driftwood fire in the cottage of the old curé of the Ile de Sein, while at her feet knelt a man with his broken arm bound to his side. And he was stroking her hands softly and repeatedly. He was trying to soothe her and make her understand that she was safe.

"Give her time, my son," the old curé said, with his deep, wise smile. "She only requires time. I have seen them before taken from the sea like her. They all require time. It is in our nature to recover from all things—in time."

XV

IN A CARAVAN

"Which means, I think, that go or stay
Affects you nothing, either way."

"And that is where Parker sleeps."

We craned our necks, and, stooping low, saw beneath the vehicle a parasitic square box like a huge barnacle fixed to the bottom of the van. A box about four feet by two. The door of it was open, and Parker's bedfellows—two iron buckets and a sack of potatoes—stood confessed.

"Oh yes—very nice," we murmured.

"Oh, it's awfully jolly!" said the host-in-himself.

We looked at Parker, who was peeling potatoes on the off-shaft—Parker, six feet two, with a soldier's bearing—and we drifted off into thought.

"And who drives?" we asked, with an intelligent interest.

"Oh, Parker. And we do all the rest, you know."

It was seven o'clock in the evening when we joined the caravan, in a stackyard on the outskirts of an Eastern county town.

"That's 'im—that's Lord George Sanger," was said of the writer by one of the crowd of small boys assembled at the stackyard gate. A travelling menagerie and circus was advertised in a somewhat "voyant" manner on the town walls, and a fancied resemblance to the aristocratic manager thereof accredited us with an honourable connection in the enterprise.

"When do you open?" inquired an intelligent spectator, anxious to show *savoir faire*.

"See small handbills," replied the host-in-himself, with equal courtesy.

"'Oo are yer, at any rate?" inquired an enlightened voter.

"Who are *you?*" we replied with spirit; and, passing through the gate, we closed it to keep out the draught. Then we paid a domiciliary visit, and were duly shown Parker's apartments.

In outward appearance the caravan suggested an overgrown bathing-machine. The interior resembled the cabin of a yacht. The walls were gaily decorated with painting on the panels; flowers bloomed in vases fixed upon the wall; two prettily curtained windows—

one a bay, the other flat—gave a view of the surrounding country. At the forward end, against the bulkhead, so to speak, was a small but enterprising chest of drawers, and above it a large looking-glass which folded down, developed legs, and owned to the soft impeachment of being a bed. Beneath the starboard window a low and capacious sofa, combining the capacity of a locker. Under the port window was fixed a table against the bulkhead, where four people could and did dine sumptuously. When *en voyage* and between meals, charts, maps, and literature littered this table pleasantly. A ship's clock hung over it, and a corner cupboard did its duty in the port quarter. A heavy plush curtain closed off the kitchen and pantry, which were roomy and of marvellous capacity. Then the back door—in halves—and the back step, brass-bound, treacherous.

In front there was a little verandah with supporting columns of bamboo. Here we usually sat when travelling—Parker in the right-hand corner handling the ribbons of the tandem cart-horses with skill and discretion.

As dinner was not ready, we proceeded to pitch the small tent wherein the two men were to sleep. It was a singular tent, with a vast number of pendent ropes which became entangled at the outset. We began with zeal, but presently left the ropes and turned our attention to the pegs. These required driving in with

a wooden mallet and a correct eye. Persons unaccustomed to such work strike the peg on one side—the mallet goes off at a tangent and strikes the striker with force upon the shin-bone.

Finally Parker said he would put up the tent "by'n-by."

There was a Bedlington terrier—Parker's dog—attached (literally) to the caravan. He was tied to one of the bamboo columns on the forecastle, and when Parker absented himself for long he usually leaped off the platform and sought death by strangulation — this we discovered later. When we abandoned the tent we thought we would cheer up the dog.

"Don't touch him, sir; he'll bite you," said Parker.

Of course we touched him; no man who respects himself at all is ready to admit that a dog bites *him*. It was wonderful how that dog and Parker understood each other. But the bite was not serious.

At last dinner was ready, and we are prepared to take any horrid oath required that no professional cook could set before a king potatoes more mealy. This only, of all the items in the *menu*, is mentioned, because where potatoes are good the experienced know that other things will never be amiss.

We waited on ourselves, and placed the dirty dishes, plates, and forks upon the back step, where Parker replaced them in a few minutes, clean.

"Oh!" exclaimed the hostess-in-herself, about 10 p.m., when we were smoking the beatific pipe, "by the way—Parker's dinner!"

In response to united shouts Parker appeared, and learned with apparent surprise that he had omitted to dine. He looked pale and worn, and told us that he had been blowing out the air-beds. At eleven o'clock we two men left the ladies and went out into the cold moonlight, where our tent looked remarkably picturesque. Of course we fell over a tent-peg each, and the host lost his watchkey. Parker came forward —dining—to explain where the ropes were, and fell over one himself, losing a piece of cold boiled beef in the grass. We hunted for it with a lucifer match. Its value was enhanced by the knowledge that when the bed was shut down and had developed its legs the larder was inaccessible. After some time Parker discovered that the dog had been let loose and had found the beef some moments before. He explained that it was a singular dog and preferred to live by dishonesty. Unstolen victuals had for him no zest. He added that the loss was of no consequence, as he never had been very keen on that piece of beef. We finally retired into the tent, and left Parker still at work completing several contracts he had undertaken to carry through

"by'n-by." He said he preferred doing them overnight, as it was no good getting up *before* five on these dark autumnal mornings.

As an interior the tent was a decided success. We went inside and hooked the flap laboriously from top to bottom. Then we remembered that the host's pyjamas were outside. He undid two hooks only and attempted to effect a *sortie* through the resultant interstice. He stuck. The position was undignified, and conducive to weak and futile laughter. At last Parker had to leave the washing-up of the saucepans to come to the rescue, while the dog barked and imagined that he was attending a burglary.

It was nearly midnight before we made our first acquaintance with an air-bed, and it took us until seven o'clock the next morning to get on to speaking terms with it. The air-bed, like the Bedlington terrier, must be approached with caution. Its manner is, to say the least of it, repellent. Unless the sleeper (save the mark!) lies geometrically in the centre, the air rushes to one side, and the ignorant roll off the other. If there were no bedclothes one could turn round easily, but the least movement throws the untucked blanket incontinently into space, while the instability of the bed precludes tucking in. Except for these and a few other drawbacks, the air-bed may safely be recommended.

The next morning showed a white frost on the

grass, and washing in the open, in water that had stood all night in a bucket, was, to say the least of it, invigorating. Parker browned our boots, put a special edge of his own upon our razors, attended to the horses, oiled the wheels, fetched the milk, filled the lamps of the paraffin stove, bought a gallon of oil, and carried a can of water from a neighbouring farm before breakfast, just by way—he explained—of getting ready to start his day's work.

An early start had been projected, but owing to the fact that after breakfast Parker had to beat the carpet, wash the dishes, plates, cups and saucers, knives and forks, and his own face, strike the tent, let the air out of the air-beds, roll up the waterproof sheets, clean the saucepans, groom the horses, ship the shafts, send off a parcel from the station, buy two loaves of bread, and thank the owner of the stackyard—owing, I say, to the fact that Parker had these things to accomplish while we "did the rest," it was eleven o'clock before all hands were summoned to get "her" out of the narrow gateway. This was safely accomplished, by Parker, while we walked round, looked knowingly at the wheels, sternly at the gate-posts, and covertly at the spectators.

Then we clambered up, the host-in-himself cracked the whip, Parker gathered up his reins.

"Come up, Squire! Come up, Nancy!"

And the joy of the caravaneer was ours.

This joy is not like the joy of other men. For the high-road, the hedgerows, the birds, the changing sky, the ever-varying landscape, belong to the caravaneer. He sits in his moving home and is saturated with the freedom of the gipsy without the haunting memory of the police, which sits like Care on the roof of the gipsy van. Book on lap, he luxuriates on the forecastle when the sun shines and the breeze blows soft, noting idly the passing beauty of the scene, returning peaceably to the printed page. When rain comes, as it sometimes does in an English summer, he goes inside and gives a deeper attention to the book, while Parker drives and gets wet. Getting wet is one of Parker's duties. And through rain and sunshine he moves on ever, through the peaceful and never dull—the incomparable beauty of an English pastoral land. The journey is accomplished without fatigue, without anxiety; for the end of it can only be the quiet corner of a moor, or some sleepy meadow. Speed is of no account—distance immaterial. The caravaneer looks down with indifference upon the dense curiosity of the smaller towns; the larger cities he wisely avoids.

The writer occupied the humble post of brakesman—elected thereto in all humility by an overpowering majority. The duties are heavy, the glory small. A clumsy vehicle like a caravan can hardly venture down the slightest incline without a skid under the wheel and a chain round the spoke. This necessitates the

frequent handling of a heavy piece of iron, which is black and greasy at the top of a hill, and red-hot at the bottom.

A steep hill through the town dispelled the Lord George Sanger illusion at one fell blow, the rustic-urban mind being incapable of conceiving that that self-named nobleman could demean himself to the laying of the skid.

Of the days that followed there remains the memory of pleasant sunny days and cool evenings, of the partridge plucked and cleaned by the roadside, fried deliciously over the paraffin flame, amidst fresh butter and mushrooms with the dew still on them. We look back with pleasure to the quiet camp in a gravel-pit on a hill-top far from the haunts of men—to the pitching of the tent by moonlight in a meadow where the mushrooms gleamed like snow, to be duly gathered for the frying-pan next morning by the host-in-himself, and in pyjamas. Nor are the sterner sides of caravan life to be forgotten—the calamity at the brow of a steep hill, where a nasty turn made the steady old wheeler for once lose his head and his legs; the hard-fought battle over a half-side of bacon between the Bedlington terrier and the writer when that mistaken dog showed a marked preference for the stolen Wiltshire over the partridge bone of charity.

And there are pleasant recollections of friends made, and, alas! lost so soon; of the merry evening in

a country house, of which the hospitable host, in his capacity of justice of the peace, gave us short shrift in the choice between the county gaol and his hospitality. Unless we consented to sleep beneath his roof and eat his salt, he vowed he would commit us for vagabonds without visible means of support. We chose the humiliation of a good dinner and a sheeted bed. The same open-handed squire hung partridges in our larder, and came with us on the forecastle to pilot us through his own intricate parish next day.

Also came the last camp and the last dinner, at which the writer distinguished himself, and the host-in-himself was at last allowed to manipulate (with accompanying lecture) a marvellous bivouac-tin containing a compound called beef *à la mode*, which came provided with its own spirits of wine and wick, both of which proved ineffectual to raise the temperature of the beef above a mediocre tepidity. Parker, having heard that the remains of this toothsome dish were intended for his breakfast, wisely hid it with such care that the dog stole it and consumed it, with results which cannot be dwelt upon here.

Of the vicissitudes of road travel we recollect but little. The incipient sea-sickness endured during the first day has now lost its sting; the little differences about the relative virtues of devilled partridge and beef *à la mode* are forgotten, and only the complete novelty, the heedless happiness of it all, remains. We did not

even know the day of the week or the date; which ignorance, my masters, has a wealth of meaning nowadays.

"Date—oh, ask Parker!" we would say.

And Parker always knew.

XVI

IN THE TRACK OF THE WANDERING JEW

> What hope is ours—what hope? To find no mercy
> After much war, and many travails done?

"Well, somebody must go; that is certain."

And more than one man looked at me. It was not because I could possibly be that somebody, although I was young enough and of little enough consequence. But Fortune had been busy with me. She had knocked all the interest out of my life, and then she had proceeded to shower her fickle favours upon me. I was by way of becoming a success in that line of life wherein I had been cast. I had been mentioned in despatches, and somehow the bullets had passed by on the other side. Her gracious Majesty had written to me twice as her dearly beloved Thomas, and I was well up in my profession.

In those days things were differently done in India. There was less telegraphing here and there

for instructions. There was more action and less talk. The native gentleman did not sit on a jury then.

"Yes," said young Martello, "somebody must go. Question is—who?"

And they looked at me again.

"There be those in high places," I said, "who shall decide."

They laughed and made no answer. They were pleased to think that I should have to decide which doctor should go to Capoo, where a sickness unknown and incomprehensible had broken out. It was true that I was senior surgeon of the division; indeed, I was surgeon-major of a tract of country as big as Scotland. It is India now, but in the days of which I write the question had not been settled with a turbulent native prince. We were, in fact, settling that question.

Capoo was right in the heart of the new country, while we were in occupation of a border town. Behind us lay India; in front, the Unknown. The garrison of Capoo was small and self-important, but sickness made itself conspicuous among its members. Their doctor—poor young Barber—died, and the self-importance of the Capoo garrison oozed out of their finger-ends. They sent down post-haste to us for help, and a special letter addressed to me detailed symptoms of no human malady.

I had two men under me. The question seemed

simple enough. One of them would have to go. As to which one there was really no doubt whatever. The duty fell upon Thurkow. Thurkow was junior. This might prove to be Thurkow's opportunity, or—the other thing.

We all knew that he would be willing enough to go; nay, he would be eager. But Thurkow's father was in command, which made all the difference.

While we were thinking over these things an orderly appeared at the mess-room door.

"Brigadier would like to see you, sir," he said to me. And I had to throw away the better half of a first-class manilla.

The brigadier's quarters were across a square in the centre of a long rambling palace, for which a handsome rent was duly paid. We were not making war. On the contrary, we were forcing peace down the throat of the native prince on the point of a sword.

Everything was upon a friendly footing. We were not an invading force. Oh, no! we were only the escort of a political officer. We had been quartered in this border town for more than a year, and the senior officers' lady-wives had brought their *lares* and *penates* in three bullock-carts a-piece.

I suppose we were objects of envy. We had all the excitement of novelty without any of the penalties of active warfare. We were strong enough to make an awful example of the whole Principality at a day's

notice, and the Principality knew it, which kept bazaar prices down and made the coloured brother remember the hue of his cheek.

In the palace there were half a dozen officers' quarters, and these had been apportioned to the married; consequently the palace had that air of homeliness which is supposed to be lacking in the quarters of single men.

As I was crossing the square I heard some one running after me, and, turning, I faced Fitz. Fitz Marner—usually called Fitz—was my second in command and two years my junior. He was quite a different sort of man to myself, and, if I may say so, a much better man. However, I am not going to talk about myself more than I can help this time. Some day I shall, and then I shall have a portrait on the cover. This is an age of portraits. But some day the British public will wake up and will refuse to read the works of a smug-faced man in spectacles who tries to make them believe that he is doughty, fearless, and beloved of beautiful damsels. The bookstalls are full to-day of works written in the first person singular, and relating deeds of the utmost daring; while on the cover is a portrait of the author —the aforesaid smug man in spectacles—who has not the good sense to suppress himself.

Fitz was tall and lithe. He had a large brown moustache and pleasantly thoughtful eyes. His smile

was the kindliest I have ever met. Moreover, a modester man than Fitz never breathed. He had a way of carrying his chin rather low, so that when he looked at one he had to raise his eyes, which imparted a pleasing suggestion of attention to his face. It always seemed to me that Fitz listened more carefully to what was said to him than other men are in the habit of doing.

"Say, doctor," he said, looking up at me in his peculiar thoughtful way, "give me a chance."

I knew what he meant. He wanted me to send him to a certain death instead of young Thurkow. Those little missions to that bourne from whence no traveller returns are all in the work of a soldier's life, and we two were soldiers, although ours was the task of repairing instead of doing the damage. Every soldier-man and most civilians know that it is sometimes the duty of a red-coat to go and get killed without pausing to ask whether it be expedient or not. One aide-de-camp may be sent on a mad attempt to get through the enemy's lines, while his colleague rides quietly to the rear with a despatch inside his tunic, the delivery of which to the commander-in-chief will ensure promotion. And in view of this the wholesome law of seniority was invented. The missions come in rotation, and according to seniority the men step forward.

Fitz Marner's place was at my side, where, by the

way, I never want a better man, for his will was iron, and he had no nerves whatever. Capoo, the stricken, was calling for help. Fitz and I knew more about cholera than we cared to discuss just then. Some one must go up to Capoo to fight a hopeless fight and die. And old Fitz—God bless him !—was asking to go.

In reply I laughed.

"Not if I can help it. The fortune of war is the same for all."

Fitz tugged at his moustache and looked gravely at me.

"It is hard on the old man," he said. "It is more than you can expect."

"Much," I answered. "I gave up expecting justice some years ago. I am sorry for the brigadier, of course. He committed the terrible mistake of getting his son into his own brigade, and this is the result. All that he does to-night he does on his own responsibility. I am not inclined to help him. If it had been you, I should not have moved an inch—you know that."

He turned half away, looking up speculatively at the yellow Indian moon.

"Yes," he muttered, "I know that."

And without another word he went back to the mess-room.

I went on and entered the palace. To reach the brigadier's quarters I had to pass down the whole length of the building, and I was not in the least

surprised to see Elsie Matheson waiting for me in one of the passage-like ante-rooms. Elsie Matheson was bound to come into this matter sooner or later—I knew that; but I did not quite know in what capacity her advent might be expected.

"What is this news from Capoo?" she asked, without attempting to disguise her anxiety. Her father, assistant political officer in this affair, was not at Capoo or near there. He was upstairs playing a rubber.

"Bad," I answered.

She winced, but turned no paler. Women and horses are always surprising me, and they never surprise me more than when in danger. Elsie Matheson was by no means a masculine young person. Had she been so, I should not have troubled to mention her. For me, men cannot be too manly, nor women too womanly.

"What is the illness they have?" she asked.

"I really cannot tell you, Elsie," I answered. "Old Simpson has written me a long letter—he always had a fancy for symptoms, you know—but I can make nothing of it. The symptoms he describes are quite impossible. They are too scientific for me."

"You know it is cholera," she snapped out with a strange little break in her voice which I did not like, for I was very fond of this girl.

"Perhaps it is," I answered.

She gave a funny little helpless look round her as if she wanted something to lean against.

"And who will go?" she asked. She was watching me keenly.

"Ah—that does not rest with me."

"And if it did?"

"I should go myself."

Her face lighted up suddenly. She had not thought of that. I bore her no ill-feeling, however. I did not expect her to love *me*.

"But they cannot spare you," she was kind enough to say.

"Everybody can always be spared—with alacrity," I answered; "but it is not a question of that. It is a question of routine. One of the others will have to go."

"Which one?" she asked with a suddenly assumed indifference.

It was precisely the question in my own mind, but relative to a very different matter. If the decision rested with Miss Matheson, which of these two men would she send to Capoo? Perhaps I looked rather too keenly into her face, for she turned suddenly away and drew the gauzy wrap she had thrown over her evening dress more closely round her throat, for the passages were cold.

"That does not rest with me," I repeated, and I went on towards the brigadier's quarters, leaving her—a white shadow in the dimly lighted passage.

I found the chief at his own dinner-table with an untouched glass of wine before him.

"This is a bad business," he said, looking at me with haggard eyes. I had never quite realized before what an old man he was. His trim beard and moustache had been white for years, but he had always been a hale man up to his work—a fine soldier but not a great leader. There was a vein of indolence in Brigadier-General Thurkow's nature which had the same effect on his career as that caused by barnacles round a ship's keel. This inherent indolence was a steady drag on the man's life. Only one interest thoroughly aroused him—only one train of thought received the full gift of his mind. This one absorbing interest was his son Charlie, and it says much for Charlie Thurkow that we did not hate him.

The brigadier had lost his wife years before. All that belonged to ancient history—to the old Company days before our time. To say that he was absorbed in his son is to state the case in the mildest imaginable form. The love in this old man's heart for his reckless, happy-souled offspring was of that higher order which stops at nothing. There is a love that worketh wonders, and the same love can make a villain of an honest man.

I looked at old Thurkow, sitting white-lipped behind the decanter, and I knew that there was villainy in his upright, honest heart. He scarcely met

my eyes. He moved uneasily in his chair. All through a long life this man had carried nobly the noblest name that can be given to any—the name of gentleman. No great soldier, but a man of dauntless courage. No strategist, but a leader who could be trusted with his country's honour. Upright, honourable, honest, brave—and it had come to this. It had come to his sitting shamefaced before a poor unknown sawbones—not daring to look him in the face.

His duty was plain enough. Charlie Thurkow's turn had come. Charlie Thurkow must be sent to Capoo—by his father's orders. But the old man—the soldier who had never turned his back on danger—could not do it.

We were old friends, this man and I. I owed him much. He had made my career, and I am afraid I had been his accomplice more than once. But we had never wronged any other man. Fitz had aided and abetted more than once. It had been an understood thing between Fitz and myself that the winds of our service were to be tempered to Charlie Thurkow, and I imagine we had succeeded in withholding the fact from his knowledge. Like most spoilt sons, Charlie was a little selfish, with that convenient blindness which does not perceive how much dirty work is done by others.

But we had never deceived the brigadier. He was not easily deceived in those matters which concerned

his son. I knew the old man very well, and for years I had been content to sit by the hour together and talk with him of Charlie. To tell the honest truth, Master Charlie was a very ordinary young man. I take it that a solution of all that was best in five Charles Thurkows would make up one Fitz Marner.

There was something horribly pathetic in the blindness of this usually keen old man on this one point. He would sit there stiffly behind the decanter fingering his wine-glass, and make statements about Charlie which would have made me blush had that accomplishment not belonged to my past. A certain cheery impertinence which characterized Charlie was fondly set down as *savoir-faire* and dash. A cheap wit was held to be brilliancy and conversational finish. And somehow we had all fallen into the way of humouring the brigadier. I never told him, for instance, that his son was a very second-rate doctor and a nervous operator. I never hinted that many of the cures which had been placed to his credit were the work of Fitz—that the men had no confidence in Charlie, and that they were somewhat justified in their opinion.

"This is a bad business," repeated the brigadier, looking hard at the despatch that lay on the table before him.

"Yes," I answered.

He tossed the paper towards me and pointed to a chair.

"Sit down!" he said sharply. "Have you had any report from poor Barber?"

In response I handed him the beginning of an official report. I say the beginning, because it consisted of four lines only. It was in Barber's handwriting, and it broke off suddenly in the middle of a word before it began to tell me anything. In its way it was a tragedy. Death had called for Barber while he was wondering how to spell "nauseous." I also gave him Colonel Simpson's letter, which he read carefully.

"What is it?" he asked suddenly, as he laid the papers aside.

"Officially—I don't know."

"And unofficially?"

"I am afraid it is cholera."

The brigadier raised his glass of claret a few inches from the table, but his hand was too unsteady, and he set the glass down again untouched. I was helplessly sorry for him. There was something abject and humiliating in his averted gaze. Beneath his white moustache his lips were twitching nervously.

For a few moments there was silence, and I dreaded his next words. I was trembling for his manhood.

"I suppose something must be done for them," he said at length, hoarsely, and it was hard to believe that

the voice was the voice of our leader—a man dreaded in warfare, respected in peace.

"Yes," I answered uncompromisingly.

"Some one must go to them——"

"Yes."

Again there was that horrid silence, broken only by the tramp of the sentinel outside the glassless windows.

"Who?" asked the brigadier, in little more than a whisper.

I suppose he expected it of me—I suppose he knew that even for him, even in mercy to an old man whose only joy in life trembled at that moment in the balance, I could not perpetrate a cruel injustice.

"It devolves on Charlie," I answered.

He gave one quick glance beneath his lashes, and again lowered his eyes. I heard a long gasping sound, as if he found difficulty in breathing. He sat upright, and threw back his shoulders with a pitiable effort to be strong.

"Is he up to the work?" he asked quietly.

"I cannot conscientiously say that he is not."

"D——n it, man," he burst out suddenly, "is there no way out of it?"

"Yes—one way!"

"What is it?"

"I will go."

"That is impossible," he answered with a sublime

unconsciousness of his own huge selfishness which almost made me laugh. This man would have asked nothing for himself. For his son he had no shame in asking all. He would have accepted my offer, I could see that, had it been possible.

At this moment the door opened, and Charlie Thurkow came in. His eyes were bright with excitement, and he glanced at us both quickly. He was quite well aware of his father's weakness in regard to himself, and I am afraid he sometimes took advantage of it. He often ignored discipline entirely, as he did in coming into the room at that moment.

I suppose there is in every one a sense of justice which accounts for the subtle annoyance caused by the devotion of parents and others—a devotion which has not the good sense to hide itself. There are few things more annoying than an exhibition of unjust love. I rose at once. The coming interview would be either painful or humiliating, and I preferred not to assist at it.

As I went down the dark passages a man in a staff uniform, wearing spurs, clanked past me. I did not know until later that it was Fitz, for I could not see his face.

I went back to my quarters, and was busy for some time with certain technicalities of my trade which are not worth detailing here. While I and my two dispensers were still measuring out and mixing drugs, Fitz came to us.

"I am going to Capoo," he said quietly.

In his silent, quick way he was taking in all that we were doing. We were packing medical stores for Capoo. I did not answer him, but waited for further details. We could not speak openly before the two assistants at that moment, and somehow we never spoke about it at all. I glanced up at him. His face was pale beneath the sunburn. There was a drawn look just above his moustache, as if his lips were held tightly.

"I volunteered," he said, "and the brigadier accepted my offer."

Whenever the word "duty" is mentioned, I think of Fitz to this day.

I said nothing, but went on with my work. The whole business was too disgusting, too selfish, too unjust, to bear speaking of.

I had long known that Fitz loved Elsie Matheson. In my feeble way, according to my scanty opportunity, I had endeavoured to assist him. But her name had never been mentioned between us except carelessly in passing conversation. I knew no details. I did not even know whether Elsie knew of his love; but it was exceedingly likely that if she did, he had not told her. As to her feelings, I was ignorant. She loved somebody, that much I knew. One can generally tell that. One sees it in a woman's eyes. But it is one thing to know that a woman loves, and quite another to find out whom

she loves. I have tried in vain more than once. I once thought that I was the favoured person—not with Elsie, with quite another woman—but I was mistaken. I only know that those women who have that in their eyes which I have learnt to recognize are better women than those who lack it.

Fitz was the first to speak.

"Don't put all of that into one case," he said to one of the dispensers, indicating a row of bottles that stood on the floor. "Divide the different drugs over the cases, so that one or two of them can be lost without doing much harm."

His voice was quite calm and practical.

"When do you go?" I asked curtly. I was rather afraid of trusting my voice too long, for Fitz was one of the few men who have really entered into my life sufficiently to leave a blank space behind them. I have been a rolling stone, and what little moss I ever gathered soon got knocked off, but it left scars. Fitz left a scar.

"My orders are to start to-night—with one trooper," he answered.

"What time?"

"In half an hour."

"I will ride with you a few miles," I said.

He turned and went to his quarters, which were next to mine. I was still at work when Charlie Thurkow came in. He had changed his dress clothes

for an old working suit. I was working in my evening dress—a subtle difference.

"Do you want any help?" he asked. I could hear a grievance in his voice.

"Of course; get on packing that case; plenty of straw between the bottles."

He obeyed me, working slowly, badly, without concentration, as he always did.

"It's a beastly shame, isn't it?" he muttered presently.

"Yes," I answered, "it is."

I suppose he did not detect the sarcasm.

"Makes me look a fool," he said heatedly. "Why couldn't the governor let me go and take my chance?"

The answer to this question being beyond my ken, I kept a discreet silence. Giving him further instructions, I presently left my junior to complete the task of packing up the necessary medicaments for Capoo.

In less than half an hour Fitz and I mounted our horses. A few of the fellows came out of the mess-room, cigar in mouth, to say good-bye to Fitz. One or two of them called out "Good luck" as we left them. Each wish was followed by a little laugh, as if the wisher was ashamed of showing even so minute an emotion. It was, after all, all in the way of our business. Many a time Fitz and I had stood idle

while these same men rode out to face death. It was Fitz's turn now—that was all.

The Sikh trooper was waiting for us in the middle of the square—in the moonlight—a grand picturesque figure. A long-faced, silent man, with deep eyes and a grizzled moustache. He wheeled his horse, and dropped ten paces in our rear.

In the course of a varied experience Fitz and I had learnt to ride hard. We rode hard that night beneath the yellow moon, through the sleeping, odorous country. We both knew too well that cholera under canvas is like a fire in a timber-yard. You may pump your drugs upon it, but without avail unless the pumping be scientific. Fitz represented science. Every moment meant a man's life. Our horses soon settled into their stride with a pleasant creaking sound of warm leather and willing lungs.

The moon was above and behind us; we each had a galloping shadow beneath our horse's forefeet. It was a sandy country, and the hoofs only produced a dull thud. There was something exhilarating in the speed—in the shimmering Indian atmosphere. A sense of envy came over me, and I dreaded the moment when I should have to turn and ride soberly home, leaving Fitz to complete his forty-five miles before daylight.

We were riding our chargers. They had naturally fallen into step, and bounded beneath us with a

regular, mechanical rhythm. Both alike had their heads down, their shoulders forward, with that intelligent desire to do well which draws a man's heart towards a horse in preference to any other animal. I looked sideways at Fitz, and waited for him to speak. But he was staring straight in front of him, and seemed lost in thought.

"You know," I said at length, "you have done that old man an ill-turn. Even if you come back he will never forgive himself. He will never look either of us straight in the face again."

"Can't help that," replied Fitz. "The thing——" He paused, as if choosing his words. "If," he went on rather quickly, "the worst comes to the worst, don't let people—*any one*—think that I did it because I didn't care, because I set no value on my life. The thing was forced upon me. I was asked to volunteer for it."

"All right," I answered, rather absent-mindedly perhaps. I was wondering who "any one" might be, and also who had asked him to throw away his life. The latter might, of course, be the brigadier. Surely it could not have been Elsie. But, as I said before, I always was uncertain about women.

I did not say anything about hoping for the best. Fitz and I had left all that nonsense behind us years before. We did our business amidst battle, murder, and sudden death. Perhaps we were callous, perhaps

we had only learnt to value the thing at its true worth, and did not set much fear on death.

And then, I must ask you to believe, we fell to talking "shop." I knew a little more about cholera than did Fitz, and we got quite interested in our conversation. It is, I have found, only in books that men use the last moment to advantage. Death has been my road-fellow all through life, and no man has yet died in my arms saying quite the right thing. Some of them made a joke, others were merely commonplace, as all men really are whether living or dying.

When the time came for me to turn back, Fitz had said nothing fit for post-mortem reproduction. We had talked unmitigated "shop," except the few odd observations I have set down.

We shook hands, and I turned back at once. As I galloped I looked back, and in the light of the great tropical moon I saw Fitz sitting forward in his saddle as the horse rose to the slope of a hill, galloping away into the night, into the unknown, on his mission of mercy. At his heels rode the Sikh, enormous, silent, soldierly.

During my steady run home I thought of those things concerning my craft which required immediate consideration. Would it be necessary to send down to India for help? Cholera at Capoo might mean cholera everywhere in this new unknown country. What about the women and children? The Wandering Jew

was abroad; would he wander in our direction, with the legendary curse following on his heels? Was I destined to meet this dread foe a third time? I admit that the very thought caused a lump to rise in my throat. For I love Thomas Atkins. He is manly and honest according to his lights. It does not hurt me very much to see him with a bullet through his lungs or a sabre cut through the collar-bone down to the same part of his anatomy. But it does hurt me exceedingly to see honest Thomas die between the sheets—the death of any common civilian beggar. Thomas is too good for that.

It was nearly three o'clock in the morning when I rode into the palace square. All round I saw the sentinels, their bayonets gleaming in the moonlight. A man was walking backwards and forwards in the middle of the square by himself. When he heard me he came towards me. At first I thought that it was my servant waiting to take the horse, but a moment later I recognized Charlie Thurkow—recognized him by his fair hair, for he was hatless. At the same time my syce roused himself from slumber in the shadow of an arch, and ran forward to my stirrup.

"Come to the hospital!" said Thurkow, the moment I alighted. His voice was dull and unnatural. I once heard a man speak in the same voice while collecting his men for a rush which meant certain death. The

man was duly killed, and I think he was trembling with fear when he ran to his death.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I don't know."

We walked—almost ran—to the hospital, a long low building in the palace compound. Charlie Thurkow led the way to a ward which we had never used—a ward I had set apart for infectious cases. A man was dozing in a long chair in the open window. As we entered he rose hastily and brought a lamp. We bent over a bed—the only one occupied. The occupant was a man I did not know. He looked like a Goorkha, and he was dying. In a few moments I knew all that there was to know. I knew that the Wandering Jew had passed our way.

"Yes," I said, rising from my knees at the bedside; "we have it."

Of the days that followed it is not my intention to say much. A woman once told me that I was afraid of nothing. She was mistaken. If she chance to read this and recognize it, I hope she will believe the assertion: I am, and always have been, afraid of cholera—in India. In Europe it is a different matter. The writing of those days would be unpleasant to me; the reading would be still less pleasant to the reader.

Brigadier-General Thurkow rose to the occasion, as we all expected him to do. It is one thing to send a man to a distant danger, and quite another to go with

him into a danger which is close at hand. Charlie Thurkow and I were the only two doctors on the spot, and before help could reach us we should probably all be dead or cured. There was no shirking now. Charlie and I were at work night and day, and in the course of thirty-six hours Charlie got interested in it. He reached the fighting point—that crisis in an epidemic of which doctors can tell—that point where there is a certain glowing sense of battle over each bed—where death and the doctor see each other face to face—fight hand to hand for the life.

The doctor loses his interest in the patient as a friend or a patient; all his attention is centred on the life as a life, and a point to be scored against the adversary Death.

We had a very bad time for two days. At the end of that time I had officers bearing Her Majesty's commission serving under me as assistant nurses, and then the women came into it. The first to offer herself was the wife of a non-commissioned officer in the Engineers, who had been through Netley. I accepted her. The second woman was Elsie Matheson. I refused point blank.

"Sooner or later," she said, looking at me steadily with something in her eyes which I could not make out, "you will have to take me."

"Does your father know you have come to me?" I retorted.

"Yes; I came with his consent."

I shook my head and returned to my writing. I was filling in a list of terrific length. She did not go away, but stood in front of me with a certain tranquillity which was unnatural under the circumstances.

"Do you want help?" she asked calmly.

"God knows I do."

"But not mine——?"

"Not yet, Elsie. I have not got so far as that yet."

I did not look up, and she stood quite still over me—looking down at me—probably noting that the hair was getting a little thin on the top of my head. This is not a joke. I repeat she was probably noting that. People do note such things at such moments.

"If you do not take me," she said, in a singularly even voice, "I shall go up to Capoo. Can you not see that that is the only thing that can save me from going to Capoo—or going mad?"

I laid aside my pen, and looked up into her face, which she made no pretence of hiding from me. And I saw that it was as she said.

"You can go to work at once," I said, "under Mrs. Martin, in ward number four."

When she had left me I did not go on filling in the list from the notes in my pocket-book. I fell to wasting time instead. So it *was* Fitz. I was not surprised, but I was very pleased. I was not surprised, because I have usually found that the better sort of

woman has as keen a scent for the good men as we have. And I thought of old Fitz—the best man I ever served with—fighting up at Capoo all alone, while I fought down in the valley. There was a certain sense of companionship in the thought, though my knowledge and experience told me that our chances of meeting again were very small indeed.

We had not heard from Capoo. The conclusion was obvious: they had no one to send.

Elsie Matheson soon became a splendid nurse. She was quite fearless—not with dash, but with the steady fearlessness that comes from an ever-present sense of duty, which is the best. She was kind and tender, but she was a little absent. In spirit she was nursing at Capoo; with us she was only in the body.

When Charlie Thurkow heard that she had gone into ward number four, he displayed a sudden, singular anger.

"It's not fit for her," he said. "How could you do it?"

And I noticed that, so far as lay in his power, he kept the worst cases away from number four.

It occasionally happens in life that duty is synonymous with inclination; not often, of course, but occasionally. I twisted inclination round into duty, and put Elsie to night work, while Charlie Thurkow kept the day watches. I myself was forced to keep both as best I could.

Whenever I went into number four ward at night before (save the mark) going to bed, I found Elsie Matheson waiting for me. It must be remembered that she was quite cut off from the little world that surrounded us in the palace. She had no means of obtaining news. Her only link with the outer universe was an occasional patient brought in more dead than alive, and too much occupied with his own affairs to trouble about those of other people.

"Any news?" she would whisper to me as we went round the beds together; and I knew that she meant Capoo. Capoo was all the world for her. It is strange how some little unknown spot on the earth will rise up and come into our lives never to leave the memory again.

"Nothing," I replied with a melancholy regularity.

Once only she broke through her reserve—through the habit of bearing pain in silence which she had acquired by being so much among dying men.

"Have you no opinion?" she asked, with a sharpness in her voice which I forgave as I heard it.

"Upon what subject?"

"Upon . . . the chances."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"He is a good man—there is no better in India—that is all I can say. Just hold the candle a little closer, will you, please? Thanks—yes—he is quite dead."

We passed on to the next bed.

"It is both his duty and his inclination to take care of himself," I said as we went—going back with her in the spirit to Capoo.

"How do you know it is his inclination?" she asked guardedly.

And I knew that I was on the right path. The vague message given to "any one" by Fitz as he rode by my side that night—only a week before, although it seemed to be months—that message was intended for Elsie. It referred to something that had gone before, of which I had no knowledge.

"Because he told me so," I answered.

And then we went on with our work. Charlie Thurkow was quite right. I knew that all along. It was not fit for her. Elsie was too young, too gentle and delicate for such a place as ward number four. I make no mention of her beauty, for I took no heed of it then. It was there—but it had nothing to do with this matter. Also I have never seen why women who are blessed or cursed by beauty should be more considered in such matters, as they undoubtedly are.

I was up and about all that night. The next morning rose gloomily, as if the day was awakening unrefreshed by a feverish sleep. The heat had been intense all night, and we could look for nothing but an intensification of it when the sun rose with a tropical

aggressiveness. I wanted to get my reports filled in before lying down to snatch a little rest, and was still at work when Charlie Thurkow came in to relieve me. He looked ghastly, but we all did that, and I took no notice. He took up the ward-sheets and glanced down the columns.

"Wish I had gone to Capoo," he muttered. "It couldn't have been worse than this."

I had finished my writing, and I rose. As I did so Charlie suddenly clapped his hand to his hip.

"I say!" he exclaimed, "I say!"

He looked at me in a stupid way, and then suddenly he tottered towards me, and I caught him.

"Old chap!" he exclaimed thickly, with his face against my shoulder, "I've got it. Take me to number four."

He had seen by the list that there was a vacant cot in number four.

I carried him there, stumbling as I went, for I was weak from want of sleep.

Elsie had just gone to her room, and Mrs. Martin was getting the vacant bed ready. I was by that bedside all day. All that I knew I did for Charlie Thurkow. I dosed myself with more than one Indian drug to stimulate the brain—to keep myself up to doing and thinking. This was a white man's life, and God forgive

me if I set undue store upon it as compared with the black lives we were losing daily. This was a brain that could think for the rest. There was more than one man's life wrapped up in Charlie Thurkow's. One can never tell. My time might come at any moment, and the help we had sent for could not reach us for another fortnight.

Charlie said nothing. He thanked me at intervals for some little service rendered, and nearly all the time his eyes were fixed upon the clock. He was reckoning with his own life. He did not want to die in the day, but in the night. He was deliberately spinning out his life till the night nurse came on duty. I suppose that in his superficial, happy-go-lucky way he loved her.

I pulled him through that day, and we managed to refrain from waking Elsie up. At nightfall she came to her post. When she came into the room I was writing a note to the brigadier. I watched her face as she came towards us. There was only distress upon it—nothing else. Even women—even beautiful women grow callous; thank Heaven! Charlie Thurkow gave a long sigh of relief when she came.

My note was duly sent to the brigadier, and five minutes afterwards I went out on to the verandah to speak to him. I managed to keep him out of the room by a promise that he should be sent for later. I made no pretence about it, and he knew that it was only

the question of a few hours when he walked back across the palace square to his quarters. I came back to the verandah, and found Elsie waiting to speak to me.

"Will he die?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Quite sure?"

There was a strange glitter in her eyes which I could not understand.

"Quite," I answered, forgetting to be professional.

She looked at me for a moment as if she were about to say something, and then she apparently decided not to say it.

I went towards a long chair which stood on the verandah.

"I shall lie down here," I said, "and sleep for an hour."

"Yes, do," she answered almost gratefully.

"You will wake me if you want me?"

"Yes."

"Wake me when . . . the change comes."

"Yes."

In a few moments I was asleep. I do not know what woke me up. It seemed to be very late. All the sounds of barrack life were hushed. The moon was just up. I rose to my feet and turned to the open window. But there I stopped.

Elsie was kneeling by Charlie Thurkow's bed. She

was leaning over him, and I could see that she was kissing him. And I knew that she did not love him.

I kicked against the chair purposely. Elsie turned and looked towards me, with her hand still resting on Charlie Thurkow's forehead. She beckoned me to go to them, and I saw at once that he was much weaker. She was stroking his hair gently. She either gave me credit for great discernment, or she did not care what I thought.

I saw that the time had come for me to fulfil my promise to the brigadier, and went out of the open window to send one of the sentinels for him. As I was speaking to the man I heard the clatter of a horse's feet, and a Sikh rode hard into the palace square. I went towards him, and he, recognizing me, handed me a note which he extracted from the folds of his turban. I opened the paper and read it by the light of the moon. My heart gave a leap in my throat. It was from Fitz. News at last from Capoo.

"We have got it under," he wrote. "I am coming down to help you. Shall be with you almost as soon as the bearer."

As I walked back towards the hospital the brigadier came running behind me, and caught me up as I stepped in by the window. I had neither time nor inclination just then to tell him that I had news from Capoo. The Sikh no doubt brought official news which

would reach their destination in due course. And in the mean time Charlie Thurkow was dying.

We stood round that bed and waited silent, emotionless for the angel. Charlie knew only too well that the end was very near. From time to time he smiled rather wearily at one or the other of us, and once over his face there came that strange look of a higher knowledge which I have often noted, as if he knew something that we did not—something which he had been forbidden to tell us.

While we were standing there the matting of the window was pushed aside, and Fitz came softly into the dimly lighted room. He glanced at me, but attempted no sort of salutation. I saw him exchange a long silent look with Elsie, and then he took his station at the bedside next to Elsie, and opposite to the brigadier, who never looked up.

Charlie Thurkow recognized him, and gave him one of those strangely patronizing smiles. Then he turned his sunken eyes towards Elsie. He looked at her with a gaze that became more and more fixed. We stood there for a few minutes—then I spoke.

"He is dead," I said.

The brigadier raised his eyes and looked across to Fitz. For a second these two men looked down into each other's souls, and I suppose Fitz had his reward. I suppose the brigadier had paid his debt in full. I had been through too many painful scenes to wish to

prolong this. So I turned away, and a general move was the result.

Then I saw that Elsie and Fitz had been standing hand-in-hand all the while.

So wags the world.

XVII

THROUGH THE GATE OF TEARS

Give us—ah! give us—but Yesterday!

In the old days, when the *Mahanaddy* was making her reputation, she had her tragedy. And Dr. Mark Ruthine has not forgotten it, nor forgiven himself yet. Doctors, like the rest of us, are apt to make a hideous mistake or two which resemble the stream anchors of a big steamer warping out into the Hooghly. We leave them behind, but we do not let go of them. They make a distinct difference to the course of our journey down the stream. Sometimes they hold us back; occasionally they swing us into the middle of the current, where there is no shoal. Like the stream anchors, they are always there, behind us, for our good.

Some few of the *Mahanaddy* passengers have remarked that Mark Ruthine invariably locks his cabin-door whenever he leaves the little den that serves

him for surgery and home. This is the outward sign of an inward unforgotten sore.

This, by the way, is not a moral tale. Virtue does not triumph, nor will vice be crushed. It is the mere record of a few mistakes, culminating in Mark Ruthine's blunder—a little note on human nature without vice in it; for there is little vice in human nature if one takes the trouble to sift that which masquerades as such.

It was, therefore, in old days, long ago, on an outward voyage to Madras, that Miss Norah Hood was placed under the care of the captain, hedged safely round by an engagement to an old playmate, and shipped off to the land where the Anglo-Saxon dabbles in tragedy.

Norah is fortunately not a common name. Mark Ruthine's countenance—a still one—changes ever so slightly whenever he hears the name or sees it in print. Another outward sign, and, as such, naturally small.

When the captain was introduced by a tall and refined old clergyman to Miss Norah Hood, he found himself shaking hands with a grave young person of unassertive beauty. Hers was the loveliness of the violet, which is apt to pall in this modern day—to aggravate, and to suggest wanton waste. For feminine loveliness is on the wane—marred, like many other good things, by over-education. Norah Hood was a typical country parson's daughter, who knew the right

and did it, ignored the wrong and refused to believe in it.

The captain was busy with his *Mahanaddy*. He looked over his shoulder, and, seeing Mark Ruthine, called him by a glance.

"This is my doctor," he said, to the scholarly parson. "He will be happy to see that Miss Hood is comfortably settled among us. I am naturally rather a busy man until we leave the Start Light behind us."

So Mark Ruthine hovered about, and discreetly looked the other way when the moment of parting came. He suspected, shrewdly enough, that Norah was the eldest of a large family—one less to feed and clothe. An old story. As the great ship glided gently away from the quay—in those days the *Mahanaddy* loaded at Southampton—he went and stood beside Norah Hood. Not that he had anything to say to her; but his calling of novelist, his experience of doctor, taught him that a silent support is what women sometimes want. They deal so largely in words that a few unexplained deeds sometimes refresh them.

He stood there until the tall, slim form in the rusty black coat was no longer discernible. Then he made a little movement and spoke.

"Have you been to your cabin?" he asked. "Do you know where it is?"

"I have not seen it," she answered composedly. "The number of my berth is seventy-seven."

There was a singular lack of fluster. It was impossible to divine that she had never trod the deck of a big steamer before—that her walk in life had been limited to the confines of a tiny, remote parish in the eastern counties. Ruthine glanced at her. He saw that she was quite self-possessed, with something more complete than the self-possession of good breeding. It was quite obvious that this woman—for Norah Hood was leaving girlhood behind—had led a narrow, busy life. She had obviously lost the habit of attaching much importance to her own feelings, her own immediate fate or passing desires, because more pressing matters had so long absorbed her. There was a faint suggestion of that self-neglect, almost amounting to self-contempt, which characterizes the manner of overburdened motherhood. This would account for her apparent ignorance of the fact that she was beautiful.

As he led the way down below Ruthine glanced at her again. He had an easy excuse for so doing on the brass-bound stairs, where landsmen feet may slip. He was, above all things, a novelist, although he wrote under another and greater name, and those around him knew him not. He looked more at human minds than human bodies, and he was never weary of telling his friends that he was a poor doctor. He concluded—indeed, her father had almost told him—that she was going out to be married. But he needed not to be told that she was going to marry a man whom she did not

love. He found that out for himself in a flash of his quiet grey eyes. An expert less skilful than himself could see that Norah Hood did not know what love was. Some women are thus—some few, God help them! go through life in the same ignorance.

He took her down to her cabin—a small one, which she was fortunate enough to have to herself. He told her the hours of the meals, the habits of the ship, and the customs of the ocean. He had a grave way with him, this doctor, and could put on a fatherly manner when the moment needed it. Norah listened with a gravity equal to his own. She listened, moreover, with an intelligence which he noted.

"If you will come," he said, "on deck again, I will introduce you to a very kind friend of mine—Mrs. Stellasis. You have heard of John Stellasis?"

"No," answered Norah, rather indifferently.

"You will some day—all the world will. Stellasis is one of our great men in India. Mrs. Stellasis is a great lady."

This was a prophecy.

They went on deck, and Mark Ruthine effected the introduction. He stayed beside them for a few moments, and did not leave them until they were deeply engrossed in a conversation respecting babies in general, and in particular a small specimen which Mrs. Stellasis had lately received.

An Indian-going steamer is rather like a big box

of toys. She goes bumping down Channel, rolling through the Bay, and, by the time that Gibraltar is left behind, she has shaken her passengers into their places.

Norah Hood shook down very quietly into the neighbourhood of Mrs. Stellasis, who liked her and began to understand her. Mrs. Stellasis—a good woman and a mother—pitied Norah Hood with an increasing pity; for as the quiet Mediterranean days wore to a close she had established without doubt the fact that the engagement to the old playmate was a sordid contract entered into in all innocence by a girl worthy of a better fate. But Mrs. Stellasis hoped for the best. She thought of the "specimen" slumbering in a berth six sizes too large for it, and reflected that Norah Hood might snatch considerable happiness out of the contract after all.

"Do you know anything of the old playmate?" Mrs. Stellasis asked Dr. Ruthine suddenly one afternoon in the Red Sea.

Mark Ruthine looked into the pleasant face and saw a back to the question—many backs, extending away into a perspective of feminine speculation.

"No," he answered slowly.

They lapsed into a little silence. And then they both looked up, and saw Norah Hood walking slowly backwards and forwards with Manly Fenn of the Guides.

After all, it was only natural that these two young persons should drift together. They were both so "quiet and stupid." Neither had much to say to the world, and they both alike heard what the world had to say with that somewhat judicial calm which knocks down feeble wit.

There was no sparkle about either of them, and the world is given to preferring bad champagne to good burgundy because of the sparkle. The world therefore left Manly Fenn alone; and Manly Fenn, well pleased, went about his own business. It has been decreed that men who go about their own business very carefully find that it is a larger affair than they at first took it to be. Manly Fenn had never been aware until quite lately that those things which he took to be his own affairs were in reality the business of an Empire. The Empire found it out before Manly Fenn—found it out, indeed, when its faithful servant was hiring himself out as assistant-herdsman to a large farmer on the Beloochistan frontier.

And Major Fenn had to buy a new uniform, had to interview many high-placed persons, and had, finally, to present himself before his Gracious Sovereign, who hooked a little cross into the padding of his tunic—all of which matters were extremely disagreeable to Manly Fenn.

Finally, the devil—as the captain bluffly affirmed—brought it to pass that he, Manly Fenn, should take

passage in the *Mahanaddy* on the voyage of which we have to do.

It was very sudden, and many thorough things are so. It happened somewhere in the Red Sea, and Mrs. Stellasis was probably the first to sniff danger in the breeze. That was why she asked Mark Ruthine if he knew anything about the old playmate to whom Norah Hood was engaged. That was why Mark Ruthine looked for the back of the question; for he was almost as expert as a woman among the humanities.

Somewhere between Ismailia and the Gate of Tears, Love came on board the *Mahanaddy*—a sorry pilot—and took charge of Manly Fenn and the girl who was going out to marry her old playmate.

It was a serious matter from the first—like a fever that takes a man of middle age who has never been ill before.

There was a consultation of the authorities—Mrs. Stellasis, namely, and the captain, and Mark Ruthine.

The captain disgraced himself early in the proceedings.

"Perhaps it is only a flirtation," he said.

Whereupon Mrs. Stellasis laughed scornfully, and the mariner collapsed. Moreover, the consultation resulted in nothing, although Stellasis himself joined it, looking grave and thoughtful behind his great grey moustache.

"Known Manly Fenn for ten years," he said;

"but I am afraid of him still. I cannot speak to him. Can you not say something to the girl?"

But Mrs. Stellasis shook her head with determination. That was the worst of it—they were not the sort of persons to whom one can say such things. The captain was technically responsible, but he had proved himself utterly incompetent. "No," said Mrs. Stellasis finally. There was nothing to be done but hope for the best. Of course, Mrs. Stellasis was without conscience — quite without justice. It is to be feared that nearly all women are. She was all for Manly Fenn and dead against the old playmate, whom she intuitively described as "that stupid."

In the mean time all the ship knew it. In some ways the two culprits were singularly innocent. It is possible that they did not know that the world is never content unless it is elbow-deep in its neighbour's pie—that their affairs were the talk of the *Mahanaddy*. It is also possible that they knew and did not care.

The good steamer pounded out of the Gate of Tears and struck a bee-line across the Arabian Sea. The passengers settled down to await the sequel which would be delivered to them at Madras.

Norah Hood and Fenn were together from morning till night. They seemed to ignore the sequel, which made it all the more exciting for the lookers-on. Norah still saw a good deal of Mrs. Stellasis. She still took a great interest in the "specimen," whose

small ailments received her careful attention. With Mark Ruthine she was almost familiar, in her quiet way. She came to his little surgery to get such minute potions as the "specimen" might require. She even got to know the bottles, and mixed the drugs herself while he laughingly watched her. She had dispensed for a village population at home, and knew a little medicine.

Ruthine encouraged her to come, gave her the freedom of his medicine chests, and all the while he watched her. She interested him. There were so many things which he could not reconcile.

In some ways she was quite a different woman. This love which had come to her suddenly—rather late in her life—had made a strange being of her. She was still gentle, and rather prim and quite self-possessed. She looked Ruthine in the face, and knew that he knew all about her; but she was not in the least discomposed. She was astonishingly daring. She defied him and the whole world—gently.

The little Dutch lighthouse at Galle was duly sighted, and the *Mahanaddy* was in the Bay of Bengal. The last dinner was duly consumed, and the usual speech made by the usual self-assertive old civilian. And, for the last time, the *Mahanaddy* passengers said good night to each other, seeking their cabins with a pleasant sense of anticipation. The next day would bring the sequel.

A stewardess awoke Mark Ruthine up before it was light. He followed the woman to number seventy-seven cabin. There he found Norah Hood, dressed, lying quietly on her berth—dead.

A bottle—one of his bottles from the medicine-chest—stood on the table beside her.

XVIII

A PARIAH

"I have heard that there is corn in Egypt."

SLYNE'S CHARE is in South Shields, and Mason's Chop House stands at the lower corner of Slyne's Chare—Mason's Chop House, where generations of honest Tyneside sailors have consumed pounds of honest mutton and beef, and onions therewith. For your true salt loves an onion ashore, which makes him a pleasanter companion at sea. Mason's Chop House is a low-roofed, red-tiled, tarred cottage with a balcony—a "balcohny" overhanging the river. It is quite evident that the "balcohny" was originally built, and has subsequently been kept in repair, by ships' carpenters. It is so glaringly ship-shape, so redolent of tar, so ridiculously strong.

The keen fresh breeze—and there is nothing keener, fresher, stronger, and wholesomer in the world than that which comes roaring up between the two piers of

the Tyne—this breeze blows right through Mason's, and blows the fume of cooking out into Slyne's Chare.

It is evening—tea-time—and the day's work is almost done; for Mason's does little in suppers. A bullet-headed boy is rubbing pewter pots at the door. Mrs. Mason, comfortably somnolent at the entrance of the little kitchen, watches her daughter — comely, grave-faced Annie Mason—"our Annie," as she is called, who is already folding the table-cloths. A few belated customers linger in the partitioned loose-boxes which lend a certain small privacy to the tables, and often save a fight. They are talking in gruff, North-country voices, which are never harsh.

A man comes in, after a moment's awkward pause at the open door, and seeks a secluded seat where the gas overhead hardly affords illumination. He is a broad-built man—a Tynesider; not so very big for South Shields; a matter of six feet one, perhaps. He carries a blue spotted handkerchief against his left cheek, and the boy with the pewter pots stares eagerly at the other. A boy of poor tact this; for the customer's right cheek is horribly disfigured. It is all bruised and battered in from the curve of a square jaw to the cheek-bone, which is broken. But the eye is intact; a shrewd, keen eye, accustomed to the penetration of a Northern mist—accustomed to a close scrutiny of men's faces. It is painfully obvious that

this sailor—for gait and clothes and manner set aside all other crafts—is horribly conscious of his deformity.

"Got the toothache?" inquires the tactless youth.

The new-comer replies in the negative and orders a cup of tea and a herring. It is Annie who brings the simple meal and sets it down without looking at the man.

"Thanks," he growls in his brown beard, and the woman pauses suddenly. She listens, as if hearing some distant sound. Then she slowly turns—for she has gone a step or two from the table—and makes a pretence of setting the salt and pepper closer to him.

Three ships had come up with the afternoon tide—a coaster, a Norwegian barque in ballast, and a full-rigged ship with nitrate from the West Coast of South America.

"Just ashore?" inquired Annie—economical with her words, as they mostly are round the Northern river.

"Ay!"

"From the West Coast?"

"Ay," grumbles the man. He holds the handkerchief to his cheek, and turns the herring tentatively with a fork.

"You'll find it's a good enough fish," says the woman, bluntly. Her two hands are pressed to her comely bosom in a singular way.

"Ay!" says the man again, as if he had no other word.

The clock strikes six, and the boy, more mindful of his own tea than his neighbour's ailments, slips on his jacket and goes home. The last customers dawdle out with a grunt intended for a salutation. Mrs. Mason is softly heard to snore. And all the while Annie Mason—all the colour vanished from her wholesome face—stands with her hands clutching her dress, gazing down at the man, who still examines the herring with a self-conscious awkwardness.

"Geordie!" she says. They are all called Geordie in South Shields

"Ay, lass!" he answers, shamefacedly.

Annie Mason sits down suddenly—opposite to him. He does not look up but remains, his face half hidden by the spotted blue handkerchief, a picture of self-conscious guilt and shame.

"What did ye did it for, Geordie?" she asks, breathlessly. "Eleven years, come March—oh, it was cruel!"

"What did I do it for?" he repeats. "What did I do it for? Why, lass, can't ye see my face?"

He drops the handkerchief, and holds up his poor scarred countenance. He does not look at her, but away past her with the pathetic shame of a maimed dog. The cheek thus suddenly exposed to view is whole and brown and healthy. Beneath the mahogany-coloured skin there is a glow singularly suggestive of a blush.

"Ay, I see your face," she answers, with a note of tenderness for the poor scarred cheek. "I hope you haven't been at the drink."

He shakes his head with a little sad smile that twists up his one-sided mouth.

"Is it because you wanted to get shot of me?" asks the woman, with a sort of breathlessness. She has large grey-blue eyes with a look of constant waiting in them—a habit of looking up at the open door at the sound of every footstep.

"D——n it, Annie. Could I come back to you with a face like this; and you the prettiest lass on the Tyneside?"

She is fumbling with her apron string. There is a half-coquettish bend of her head—with the grey hairs already at the temple—awakened perhaps by some far-off echo in his passionate voice. She looks up slowly, and does not answer his question.

"Tell us," she says slowly. "Tell us where ye've been."

"Been?—oh, I don't know, lass! I don't rightly remember. Not that it matters. Up the West Coast, trading backwards and forwards. I've got my master's certificate now. Serving first mate on board the *Mallard* to Falmouth for orders, and they ordered us to the Tyne. I brought her round—I knew the way. I thought you'd be married, lass. But maybe ye are?"

"Maybe I'm daft," puts in Annie, coolly.

"I greatly feared," the man goes on with the slow self-consciousness of one unaccustomed to talk of himself. "I greatly feared I'd meet up with a bairn of yours playing in the doorway. Losh! I could not have stood *that!* But that's why I stayed away, Annie, lass! So that you might marry a man with a face on him. I thought you would not know me if I held up my handkerchief over my other cheek!"

There is a strange gleam in the woman's eyes—a gleam that one or two of the old masters have succeeded in catching and imparting to the face of their Madonnas, but only one or two.

"How did you come by your hurt?" she asks in her low voice.

"Board the old *Walleroo* going out. You mind the old ship? We had a fire in the hold, and the skipper he would go down alone to locate it before we cut a hole in the deck and shipped the hose in. The old man did not come up again. Ye mind him. Old Rutherford of Jarrow. And I went down and looked for him. It was a hell of smoke and fire, and something in the cargo stinking like—like hell fire as it burnt. I got a hold of the old man, and was fetching him out on my hands and knees, when something busts up and sends us all through the deck. I had three months in Valparaiso hospital; but I saved old Jack Rutherford of Jarrow. And when I got up and looked at my face I saw that it was not in the nature of things that I

could ever ask a lass to have me. So I just stayed away and made believe that—that I had changed my mind."

The man pauses. He is not glib of speech, though quick enough at sea. As he takes up the little teapot and shakes it roundwise, after the manner of the galley, his great brown hand shakes too.

"I would not have come back here," he goes on after a silence; "but the *Mallard* was ordered to the Tyne. And a chap must do his duty by his shipmates and his owners. And I thought it would be safe—after eleven years. When I saw the old place and smelt the smell of the old woman's frying-pan, I could not get past the door. But I hung around, looking to make sure there were no bairns playing on the floor. I have only come in, lass, to pass the time of day and to tell you ye're a free woman."

He is not looking at her. He seems to find that difficult. So he does not see the queer little smile—rather sadder, in itself, than tears.

"And you stayed away eleven years—because o' *that?*" says the woman, slowly.

"Ay, you know, lass, I'm no great hand at the preaching and Bibles and the like; but it seems pretty clear that them who's working things did not think it fit that we should marry. And so it was sent. I got to think it so in time—least, I think it's that sometimes. And no woman would like to say, 'That's my

man—him with only half a face.' So I just stayed away."

"All for that?" asks the woman, her face, which is still pretty and round and rosy, working convulsively.

"Ay, lass."

"Then, honey," she cries softly, "you dinna understand us women!"

XIX

THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN

"YES, mother, he will come. Of course he will come!" And the girl turned her drawn and anxious young face towards the cottage door, just as if her blind mother could see the action.

It is probable that the old woman divined the longing glance from the change in the girl's tone, for she, too, half turned towards the door. It was a habit these two women had acquired. They constantly looked towards the door for the arrival of one who never came through the long summer days, through the quiet winter evenings; moreover, they rarely spoke of other things, this arrival was the topic of their lives. And now the old woman's life was drawing to a close, as some lives do, without its object. She herself felt it, and her daughter knew it.

There was in both of them a subtle sense of clinging. It was hard to die without touching the reward of a wondrous patience. It was cruel to deprive the

girl of this burden, for in most burdens there is a safeguard, in all a duty, and in some the greatest happiness allotted to human existence.

It was no new thing, this waiting for the scapegrace son; the girl had grown up to it, for she would not know her brother should she meet him in the street. Since sight had left the old mother's eyes, she had fed her heart upon this hope.

He had left them eighteen years before in a fit of passionate resentment against his father, whose only fault had been too great an indulgence for the son of his old age. Nothing had been too good for dear Stephen—hardly anything had been good enough. Educated at a charity school himself, the simple old clergyman held the mistaken view that no man can be educated above his station.

There are some people who hold this view still, but they cannot do so much longer. Strikes, labour troubles, and the difficulties of domestic service, so-called gentleman farmers, gentleman shopkeepers and lady milliners—above all, a few colonies peopled by University failures, will teach us in time that to educate our sons above their station is to handicap them cruelly in the race of life.

Stephen Leach was one of the early victims to this craze. His father, having risen by the force of his own will and the capabilities of his own mind from the People to the Church, held, as such men do, that he

had only to give his son a good education to ensure his career in life. So everything—even to the old parson's sense of right and wrong—was sacrificed to the education of Stephen Leach at public school and University. Here he met and selected for his friends youths whose futures were ensured, and who were only passing through the formula of an education so that no one could say they were unfit for the snug Government appointment, living, or inheritance of a more substantial sort, that might be waiting for them. Stephen acquired their ways of life without possessing their advantages, and the consequence was something very nearly approaching to ruin for the little country rectory. Not having been a University man himself, the rector did not know that at Oxford or Cambridge, as in the army, one may live according to one's taste. Stephen Leach had expensive tastes, and he unscrupulously traded on his father's ignorance. He was good-looking, and had a certain brilliancy of manner which "goes down" well at the 'Varsity. Everything was against him, and at last the end came. At last the rector's eyes were opened, and when a narrow-minded man's eyes are once opened he usually becomes stony at heart.

Stephen Leach left England, and before he landed in America his father had departed on a longer journey. The ne'er-do-well had the good grace to send back the little sums of money saved by his mother in her

widowhood, and gradually his letters ceased. It was known that he was in Chili, and there was war going on there, and yet the good old lady's faith never wavered.

"He will come, Joyce," she would say; "he will surely come."

And somehow it came to be an understood thing that he was to come in the afternoon when they were all ready for him—when Joyce had clad her pretty young form in a dark dress, and when the old lady was up and seated in her chair by the fire in winter, by the door in summer. They had never imagined his arrival at another time. It would not be quite the same should he make a mistake and come in the morning, before Joyce had got the house put right.

Yet, he never came. A greater infirmity came instead, and at last Joyce suggested that her mother should not get up in bad weather. They both knew what this meant, but the episode passed as others do, and Mrs. Leach was bedridden. Still she said—

"He will come, Joyce! He will surely come."

And the girl would go to the window and draw aside the curtain, looking down the quiet country road towards the village.

"Yes, mother, he will come!" was her usual answer; and one day she gave a little exclamation of surprise and almost of fear.

"Mother," she exclaimed, "there is some one coming along the road."

The old lady was already sitting up in bed, staring with her sightless orbs towards the window.

Thus they waited. The man stopped opposite the cottage, and the two women heard the latch of the gate. Then Joyce, turning, saw that her mother had fainted. But it was only momentary. By the time she reached the bed her mother had recovered consciousness.

"Go," said the old lady, breathlessly; "go and let him in yourself."

Downstairs, on the doorstep, the girl found a tall man of thirty or thereabouts with a browner face than English suns could account for. He looked down into her eager eyes with a strange questioning wonder.

"Am I too late?" he asked in a voice which almost seemed to indicate a hope that it might be so.

"No, Stephen," she answered. "But mother cannot live much longer. You are just in time."

The young man made a hesitating little movement with his right hand and shuffled uneasily on the clean stone step. He was like an actor called suddenly upon the stage having no knowledge of his part. The return of this prodigal was not a dramatic success. No one seemed desirous of learning whether he had lived upon husks or otherwise and with whom he had eaten.

The quiet dignity of the girl, who had remained behind to do all the work and bear all the burden, seemed in some subtle manner to deprive him of any romance that might have attached itself to him. She ignored his half-proffered hand, and turning into the little passage, led the way upstairs.

Stephen Leach followed silently. He was rather large for the house, and especially for the stairs; moreover, he had a certain burliness of walk, such as is acquired by men living constantly in the open. There was a vaguely-pained look in his blue eyes, as if they had suddenly been opened to his own shortcomings. His attitude towards Joyce was distinctly apologetic.

When he followed the girl across the threshold of their mother's bedroom the old lady was sitting up in bed, holding out trembling arms towards the door.

Here Stephen Leach seemed to know better what to do. He held his mother in his arms while she sobbed and murmured out her joy. He had no words, but his arms meant more than his lips could ever have told.

It would seem that the best part of happiness is the sharing of it with some one else.

"Joyce," was the first distinct word the old lady spoke, "Joyce, he has come at last. He has come! Come here, dear. Kiss your brother. This is my firstborn—my little Steve."

The young man had sunk upon his knees at the

bedside, probably because it was the most convenient position. He did not second his mother's proposal with much enthusiasm. Altogether he did not seem to have discovered much sympathy with the sister whom he had left in her cradle.

Joyce came forward and leaned over the bed to kiss her brother while the old lady's hands joined theirs. Just as her fresh young lips came within reach he turned his face aside, so that the kiss fell on barren ground on his tanned cheek.

"Joyce," continued the old lady, feverishly, "I am not afraid to die now, for Stephen is here. Your brother will take care of you, dear, when I am gone."

It was strange that Stephen had not spoken yet; and it was perhaps just as well, because there are occasions in life when men do wisely to keep silent.

"He is strong," the proud mother went on. "I can feel it. His hands are large and steady and quiet, and his arms are big and very hard."

The young man knelt upright and submitted gravely to this maternal inventory.

"Yes," she said, "I knew he would grow to be a big man. His little fingers were so strong—he hurt me sometimes. What a great moustache! I knew you had been a soldier. And the skin of your face is brown and a little rough. What is this? what is this, Stephen dear? Is this a wound?"

"Yes," answered the Prodigal, speaking for the

first time. "That is a sword cut. I got that in the last war. I am a colonel in the Chilian army, or was, before I resigned."

The old lady's sightless eyes were fixed on his face, as if listening for the echo of another voice in his deep quiet tones.

"Your voice is deeper than your father's ever was," she said; and all the while her trembling fingers moved lovingly over his face, touching the deep cut from cheek-bone to jaw with soft inquiry. "This must have been very near your eye, Stephen. Promise me, dear, no more soldiering."

"I promise that," he replied, without raising his eyes.

Such was the home-coming of the Prodigal. After all, he arrived at the right moment in the afternoon, when the house was ready. It sometimes does happen so in real life, and not only in books. There is a great deal that might be altered in this world, but sometimes, by a mere chance, things come about rightly. And yet there was something wrong, something subtle, which the dying woman's duller senses failed to detect. Her son, her Stephen, was quiet, and had not much to say for himself. He apparently had the habit of taking things as they came. There was no enthusiasm, but rather a restraint in his manner, more especially towards Joyce.

The girl noticed it, but even her small experience

of human kind had taught her that large, fair-skinned men are often thus. They are not "de ceux qui s'expliquent," but go through life placidly, leaving unsaid and undone many things which some think they ought to say and do.

After the first excitement of the return was over it became glaringly apparent that Stephen had arrived just in time. His mother fell into a happy sleep before sunset; and when the active young doctor came a little later in the evening he shook his head.

"Yes," he said, "I see that she is asleep and quiet —too quiet. It is a foretaste of a longer sleep; some old people have it."

For the first time Joyce's courage seemed to give way. When she had been alone she was brave enough, but now that her brother was there, woman-like, she seemed to turn to him with a sudden fear. They stood side by side near the bed, and the young doctor involuntarily watched them. Stephen had taken her hand in his with that silent sympathy which was so natural and so eloquent. He said nothing, this big, sun-tanned youth; he did not even glance down at his sister, who stood small, soft-eyed, and gentle at his side.

The doctor knew something of the history of the small family thus momentarily united, and he had always feared that if Stephen Leach did return it would only kill his mother. This, indeed, seemed to be the result about to follow.

Presently the doctor took his leave. He was a young man engaged in getting together a good practice, and in his own interest he had been forced to give up waiting for his patients to finish dying.

"I am glad you are here," he said to Stephen, who accompanied him to the door. "It would not do for your sister to be alone; this may go on for a couple of days."

It did not go on for a couple of days, but Mrs. Leach lived through that night in the same semi-comatose state. The two watchers sat in her room until supper-time, when they left their mother in charge of a hired nurse, whose services Joyce had been forced to seek.

After supper Stephen Leach seemed at last to find his tongue, and he talked in his quiet, almost gentle voice, such as some big men possess, not about himself or the past, but about Joyce and the future. In a deliberate business-like way, he proceeded to investigate the affairs of the dying woman and the prospects of her daughter; in a word, he asserted his authority as a brother, and Joyce was relieved and happy to obey him.

It is not in times of gaiety that friendships are formed, but in sorrow or suspense. During that long evening this brother and sister suddenly became intimate, more so than months of prosperous intercourse could have made them. At ten o'clock Stephen quietly

insisted that Joyce should go to bed while he lay down, all dressed, on the sofa in the dining-room.

"I shall sleep perfectly; it is not the first time I have slept in my clothes," he said simply.

They went upstairs together and told the nurse of this arrangement. Joyce remained for some moments by the bedside watching her mother's peaceful sleep, and when she turned she found that Stephen had quietly slipped away. Wondering vaguely whether he had intentionally solved her difficulty as to the fraternal good-night, she went to her own room.

The next morning Mrs. Leach was fully conscious, and appeared to be stronger; nevertheless, she knew that the end was near. She called her two children to her bedside, and, turning her blind eyes towards them, spoke in broken sentences.

"I am ready now—I am ready," she said. "Dears, I am going to your father—and . . . thank God, I can tell him that I have left you together. I always knew Stephen would come back. I found it written everywhere in the Bible. Stephen—kiss me, dear!"

The man leant over the bed and kissed her.

"Ah!" she sighed, "how I wish I could see you—just once before I die. Joyce!" she added, suddenly turning to her daughter, who stood at the other side of the bed, "tell me what he is like. But—I know . . . I *know*—I feel it. Listen! He is tall and spare, like his father. His hair is black, like—like his father's

—it was black before he went away. His eyes, I know, are dark—almost black. He is pale—like a Spaniard!" . . .

Joyce, looking across the bed with slow horror dawning in her face, looked into a pair of blue eyes beneath tawny hair, cut short as a soldier's hair should be. She looked upon a man big, broad, fair—English from crown to toe—and the quiet command of his lips and eyes made her say—

"Yes, mother, yes."

For some moments there was silence. Joyce stood pale and breathless, wondering what this might mean. Then the dying woman spoke again.

"Kiss me," she said. "I . . . am going. Stephen first—my firstborn! And now, Joyce . . . and now kiss each other—across the bed! I want to hear it . . . I want . . . to tell . . . your . . . father."

With a last effort she raised her hands, seeking their heads. At first Joyce hesitated, then she leant forward, and the old woman's chilled fingers pressed their lips together. That was the end.

Half an hour afterwards Joyce and this man stood facing each other in the little dining-room. He began his explanation at once.

"Stephen," he said, "was shot—out there—as a traitor. I could not tell her that! I did not mean to do this, but what else could I do?"

He paused, moved towards the door with that same

strange hesitation which she had noticed on his arrival. At the door he turned, to justify himself.

"I still think," he said gravely, "that it was the best thing to do."

Joyce made no answer. The tears stood in her eyes. There was something very pathetic in the distress of this strong man, facing, as it were, an emergency of which he felt the delicacy to be beyond his cleverness to handle.

"Last night," he went on, "I made all the necessary arrangements for your future—just as Stephen would have made them—as a brother might have done. I . . . he and I were brother officers in a very wild army. Your brother—was not a good man. None of us were." His hand was on the door. "He asked me to come and tell you," he added. "I shall go back now. . . ."

They stood thus: he watching her face with his honest soft blue eyes, she failing to meet his glance.

"May I come back again?" he asked suddenly.

She gave a little gasp, but made no answer.

"I will come back in six months," he announced quietly, and then he closed the door behind him.

THE END

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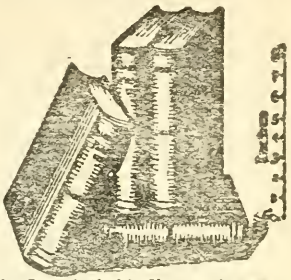

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